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THE DUTY OF ALTRUISM

THE DUTY OF ALTRUISM

BY

RAY MADDING McCONNELL, PH.D.

~~INSTRUCTOR IN SOCIAL ETHICS~~
INSTRUCTOR IN SOCIAL ETHICS

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

New

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THE DUTY OF ALTRUISM

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

THERE is no more perplexing problem before the philosophy of conduct than the search for a sufficient ground of the obligation to be altruistic. That humanity acknowledges the existence of this obligation is plainly shown by a psychological analysis and historical survey of the phenomena of moral consciousness. This investigation undertakes a study of the attempted solutions of the problem.

The most common way of trying to solve the problem is altogether unsatisfactory. It shows, first, that the man who "fulfills his duties to himself" by taking good care of himself is also "fulfilling his duties to others" in becoming capable of rendering greater service to them, that is, in becoming a better providing father and husband and a more intelligent and useful citizen; and secondly, that the man who "fulfills his duties to others" by serving them, being a good husband, father, and citizen, is at the same time "fulfilling his duties to himself" in enlarging his life. Such a procedure as this merely evades the problem. Of course there are innumerable instances where the interests of self and the interests of others are perfectly compatible, so interlaced as to be

inseparable. But the question is, Are there not cases where the interests of self are antagonistic to the interests of others; and if so, what is to be done? Paulsen's argument¹ that the effects of an action supposed to concern only the agent always really extend to others, and that the effects of an action supposed to concern only others always really include the agent also, has absolutely no bearing upon the settlement of the question as to whose interest should be dominant in the agent's intention, and why; nor of the question whether there may not be cases where the interests are opposed, and the *effects* of the action are good for the agent but bad for others. Paulsen does not prove a universal identity of interests by citing a few cases where the interests are identical. Is it always true that "one's industry affects beneficially all others, while one's laziness injures others"? Does the "servant of the state," to cite one of Paulsen's examples, in supplanting another in office, do the one supplanted a good? And when he places his son ahead of the son of another father, does he serve this other father and son? No such procedure as Paulsen's can be adequate proof that the interests of one individual are never antagonistic to the interests of another individual or even of most other individuals. No such procedure can prove the impossibility of conflict between egoism and altruism, or afford any assistance towards finding a rational ground for preferring altruism to egoism.² Paulsen's

¹ Paulsen, "System der Ethik," Bd. I, S. 377 ff.

² Precisely the same criticism may be passed on Spencer's two chapters, "Egoism *versus* Altruism," and "Altruism *versus*

whole case is made out in showing (1) that usually individual virtues affect also other persons beneficially, and social virtues affect also the individual beneficially, and (2) that usually no separation is made in the motives of actions between the interests of self and the interests of others. "The farmer who ploughs his field could not understand the question as to whose interest he had in view; the artist, the scholar, and the statesman would not say that they worked exclusively either for themselves or for others." Now neither of these facts is an argument that there can never be any conflict between the interests of self and the interests of others. In fact, Paulsen's discussion finally weakens down into the statement, "What the foregoing was intended to show is only this: that contradiction between one's own welfare and others' welfare, and between selfish and altruistic motives, forms not the rule, but the exception. The rule is agreement in effects as well as in motives." ¹ But the real problem is in these exceptional cases. The great question is this: Can we prove to a man in these exceptional times that he *ought* to prefer the interests of others to his own, that he *ought* to seek the good of others at the cost of his own?

The conflict between egoism and altruism is very frequently smoothed over by obscuring the ques-

Egoism," in his "Data of Ethics," pp. 187-218. The only concern is to try to show that the interests of self are best conserved by a proper regard for the interests of others, and that the interests of others are best conserved by a proper regard for the interests of self. There is no real weighing of egoism and altruism in the scales of moral worth.

¹ Paulsen, *op. cit.*, Bd. I, S. 384.

tion at issue. Each side devotes attention to showing how the position of its opponent may be resolved into its own, and there is no conflict. For instance, when the altruist says that the mother is not moved to the nursing and care of her infant through any calculation of her own pleasure and profit, the egoist replies that the sympathetic feeling on the part of the mother is her own feeling, and that she is moved by this feeling and consequently by a self-regarding motive. And when Max Stirner, the arch-egoist, says, "She can will only her own volitions, think only her own thoughts, feel only her own feelings; and only her own thoughts and feelings can be the motives of her will," it is replied from the other side, "Of course she alone can be the *subject* of her thought, feeling, and will; but it is an altogether different question as to whether she alone can be the *object* of her thought, feeling, and will." In such cases, however, where the interests of self and the interests of others are so nearly identical that it is impossible to separate them or to say which predominates, the question is not easily studied. When these two groups of interests coincide, the ethical problem becomes obscured. The problem is seen at its best in those "exceptions," when the two groups are in vital conflict. Then, on which side lies the right? *Ought* I to seek the interests of self or the interests of others? And what is the ground of the obligation?

Society has often been compared to a living organism. It is said that society is a unitary being, the members of which are related just as the members of the human body are related.

Society's members are brought forth by it; they have life and activity only in it; they function as its members; they speak its language; they think its thoughts; and the well-being of each is wrapped up in the well-being of all. This is the wholly general and "orthodox" view of the matter, and of course has a great deal of truth in it, as Spencer and many others have pointed out; but it is not the whole truth. The connection between a human individual and the other individuals who compose society is not so close and vital as that between the members of a physical organism. There is no truth in speaking of the human body as an aggregate of individual entities, but there is a measure of truth in speaking of society as "an aggregate of human individuals." The parts of the human body, hands, feet, ears, eyes, etc., cannot break away from each other to lead more or less separate existences; but human beings can separate themselves, isolate themselves from one another, and lead independent existences. The parts of a physical organism are not mobile and interchangeable — hands and ears cannot change places; but in society the farmer of to-day may become the legislator of to-morrow, and the legislator of to-day may become the school-teacher or shoemaker of tomorrow. In the human body, the hand does not want to be the stomach — it may be said to be satisfied in procuring food for the stomach, knowing that it is vitally connected with the stomach and that the good of the two is inseparable. But in society a "hand" often wants to be a "stomach," letting other hands work for it, and distributing to them

only enough nourishment to secure their continued production while it enlarges indefinitely. In the physical organism there is nothing that corresponds to the initiative of the individual and the imitation of the multitude — the leadership of the one and the following of the many. There is nothing that corresponds to the transforming power of individual personality. Society may be called an “organization,” but not an “organism.” And the social organization is psychological, an organization of thoughts, sentiments, desires, volitions, consciences. This psychological organization is entirely different from a biological organism, an organization of organs and functions, nerves, muscles, tissue, centres, connections, and processes. There is no similarity between organic processes and the social processes of imitation and invention, instruction and learning, art, morality, and religion. That the analogy is faulty under existing conditions, few can doubt; society as at present constituted is improperly called an organism. It may further be doubted that “Society an Organism” is a proper ideal for society. In an organism there are inferior parts. There are parts that are more “means” than “sharers in the end.” A finger-nail or a hair is an inferior part, and contributes but little towards the perfection of the other parts, and derives only a small share of the total good. Of course, as a finger-nail or a hair, its health is wrapped up in the health of the other parts; but in the “social organism” who is satisfied to be a finger-nail or a hair? In the human body, a finger-nail or a hair is not a potential stomach; but in society, a human individual

is a potential stomach. How can he be contented with receiving portions of nutriment capable of sustaining only a finger-nail or a hair? And, on the other side, who is satisfied to be only a social stomach, doing all the digesting in place of others, and distributing the nutriment to them? The analogy is simply not a good one. Every human individual is to a large extent separate from other individuals, or in other words, is a complete organism in himself and at competition and strife with other complete organisms.

Bringing this idea over to our consideration of egoism and altruism, how can we maintain that there is no conflict between the interests of self and the interests of others, that the good of each is inseparably bound up with the good of all? This may be the ideal of evolution, but it is not a present fact. Even in the human body, perhaps the good of the whole is not inseparably bound up with the good of the parts. There may be parts of the human body that are only dangerous and detrimental to the other parts. In the process of evolution the other parts may wage war on these parts until they are finally destroyed. In society there are parts like the criminal classes that are only dangerous and detrimental to the other parts. There are many parts that are in conflict. The "food" is not sufficient for all; there come times when only one can be satisfied. In the case of a conflict between the interests of self and of others what *ought* to be done? Ought the self to "prefer" the interests of others; or ought it to "prefer" its own interests; or ought it to effect a compromise? What ought it to do, and why? Or,

perhaps "ought" is merely an expression of our ignorance of facts, denoting what we think probable. If we knew all the facts, perhaps we should not say "ought," but should say "will," — "A will prefer his own interest; B will prefer C's interest; and D will compromise with E, thinking that this is ultimately for his own interest, since thus he may save as much of his life as possible."

The belief that there are no cases in the life of any individual where his own interests are at variance with the interests of others is an unwarrantable optimism. There are certainly some such cases, situations in which either one's own advantage must be pursued at the expense of the well-being of others, or their advantage must be permitted at the expense of one's own well-being. That there is this possibility of difference in interest is attested by the presence of egoists in the world. Men could not delude themselves in such a way as to oppose their interest to the interest of others, if there were really no difference in interests.

Some people not only deny the possibility of a real conflict in interests, but deny also that there is any real egoism in the world. But any statement that egoism is impossible is contradicted by the great number of egoistic systems of moral philosophy. (Bentham said that we need not expect any one to lift even his little finger for another unless he has some interest, some pleasure, in doing it; for such a thing is not so, and never will be so. Similarly thought Hobbes, Helvetius, and a great many others. Max Stirner said that a man could no more get outside of seeking his own interests in action than he could get outside of his

own skin.) The statement that egoism is impossible is contradicted by the numerous philosophical attempts to refute the egoistic philosophy and to prove egoism irrational. It is contradicted by society's attempts to protect itself from the harmful effects of egoism. It is contradicted by society's efforts to reform egoists and to convert them into altruists. And finally, it is contradicted by the personal experience of nearly all of us. It is a safe assertion that scarcely a single life is altogether spared a tragic struggle between egoism and altruism, and a necessary and painful choice in favor of the one or the other. In such a moment of self-denial let one console himself, if he can, with the belief that perhaps in the long run or in heaven the case will be shown not to have been a real sacrifice!

The question of egoism and altruism is then this: In the case where I regard my own best interest to be in conflict with the interest of another or others, which interest *ought* I to seek, and why? Am I to pursue my own good even to the detriment of others' good, or must I pursue their good even to the detriment of my own? And what is the ground of the obligation? Evidently not all men are altruists; and evidently not all men are egoists. Is the one better than the other? If so, why? Can any rational ground be found by which a man may be convinced that he ought to prefer altruism?

The position of egoism may be stated as follows: You can never succeed in finding in my good a durable point of union with yours; my interest and your interest never cease at bottom to repel

each other. I should strive after what is good for myself without regard to whether others' welfare is thereby furthered or hindered. What is good for others should concern me only incidentally, that is, when by chance it happens to enter as a means of promoting my own good. When interests are incompatible, it is the affair of each individual to choose, and to be on guard against receiving damage from the choices of others.

Each individual has a sacred respect for his own interests. Under the outward form of mutual regard there is always an armed peace. There is nothing farther from natural man than frank and devoted love, forgetfulness of self, sacrifice. Instinct conserves self; habitude conserves self; all the natural tendencies conserve self; evolution conserves and enlarges self. Who then will sacrifice himself for some superior ideal? No habitude, no tendency conscious of itself, no evolution, seems able to lead one to do it. The essential and fundamental trait of all men is self-love. That is the solid basis of all our morality. This love of self, though it be transformed and diversified in a thousand ways through the slow action of evolution, rests always at the bottom of man's nature, hidden like the roots of a tree. You would tear it up and take it out of the moral world, — do you not perceive that the moral world would entirely wither and pass away without it? ¹

Altruism argues against egoism: Egoism rests upon the dogmatic assertion of an isolated ego, closed towards others, impenetrable, — an inde-

¹ Adapted from Guyau, "*La morale anglaise contemporaine*," pp. 402-405.

pendent individual forming a universe entire in himself and having no solidarity with anything else; but such a conception is illusory. Real man is in the midst of a society of similar personal beings, to whom the most varied sentiments and impulses bind him. The isolated man, whom egoism feigns, is a pure abstraction and has no substratum in reality.

But the egoist is not to be caught and killed so easily as this. The issue between egoism and altruism is not a question of "independent realities" and "isolated individuals." Egoism may accept fully the thesis that there are innumerable relations between each and all, and that every individual affects, and is affected by, every other. It maintains, however, that this relationship is antagonistic and self-assertive, a combat, a "struggle for existence," instead of a "love feast."

There is antagonism between each individual and every other. What you have, added to what I have, makes a total or whole of which I possess a part. The whole or total, being greater than the part, is more desirable than the part. What you possess I do not possess. We are not in the celestial city. We are in the world of matter, where the good of one is limited by the good of others. Moreover, there is not only this limitation everywhere, but the limitations themselves are unequal; and to the separation of interests inequality is added. When will come that ideal perfection of society when I cannot envy others anything nor they envy me anything, when each one possesses what the others possess, when all social inequalities have passed away, and the same happiness is

experienced by all the different persons? Not until you have radically changed the order of the universe so that the happiness of all will be identical with the happiness of each. Until this perfection has come, there is no guarantee nor good ground for hope that one's actions and thoughts will not gravitate towards self and self-interest.¹

The egoist says: My happiness is worth as much as, and even more than, yours. There is nothing divine in your happiness that I do not find in mine. Your feelings of happiness are not more valuable than mine. By what right do you wish me to sacrifice happiness in my case that it may exist in yours? Each one for himself! There is that in me, belonging by right of my very selfhood to me, which I cannot surrender or disturb without ceasing to be virtuous and true to the nature of a self. Devotion to the good of others must not threaten the supreme rights of my own self.

Thus the egoist holds that there is a natural tendency and a natural right to seek his own happiness. How can he be convinced that he should seek another's happiness, if he regards it as opposed or detrimental to his own? How can he be led to identify his good with another's good when he is excluded from the enjoyment of that good? How can happiness have the same value for him in the two cases: (1) when experienced by him, (2) when not experienced by him but by some other? Is there not a fundamental opposition between the two propositions: (1) the happiness of each is the reasonable aim of each, and the happiness of all is the reasonable aim of all;

¹ Condensation from Guyau, *op cit.*, pp. 310-314.

(2) the happiness of another or of all others is the reasonable aim of each? How can a man be made to value "the universal good" instead of solely or chiefly his own? How can he be led to say, "My own good is of no more importance, as a part of universal good, than the good of any other"? Even in "the universal good" how can he be induced to admit an arithmetical equality and say that the happiness experienced by any one individual is equal to the happiness experienced by any other individual? How can he be prevented from attaching greater importance to some one individual, especially himself?

Pure altruism says not only that actions are bad if they aim at the individual's own welfare at the expense of others' welfare, but also that actions have moral worth only in as much as motivated by the interest of others. Pure egoism says that actions have moral value only in as much as motivated by self-interest — the individual's own welfare should be the sole aim of action. These two positions are the question at issue in the present discussion. When the motive of an action must be *either* one's own welfare, *or* that of others, which *ought* it to be, and why? If altruism is to be preferred, what is the rational ground? Moreover, what measure is there to be — how much self-interest is to be sacrificed for so much interest of others? If A has, and B has not, ought A to give to B? The object may be money, pleasure, time, health, knowledge or any other good. The condition is that A is to take from himself and give to B. It cannot be supposed that by giving to B, A increases his store. The question is, "Why ought

A to give to B?" How explain away the absurdity of a sacrifice without compensation, an expenditure without profit or return?

It is true that many of the general interests could be furthered on the basis of self-interest. The official who serves the state finds his own advantage in good service. The manufacturer who applies and develops useful inventions for the good of society thereby reaps his own reward. But this could never go to the extent of self-sacrifice. It is only in a very few cases that there is any truth in the assertion that sacrifices for the group or community serve also the good of the actor himself. The man who rescues another by giving his own life, or the soldier who remains true to his post when fidelity will certainly bring about his death, may in some cases do it from a self-seeking motive of notoriety, fame, or glory; but in numerous cases this could not be the motive, because the conditions are such that honor and fame cannot be attained.¹

Real sacrifices are socially necessary in practice: the sentinel lets himself be killed in order to give warning of the presence of the enemy; the physician sacrifices his life in an epidemic. Any soldier, policeman, fireman, railroad or steamship employee, or, in fact, the most obscure man in the world, may find himself face to face with the alternative of sacrificing his life or proving untrue to his sense of duty. But how can we lead a man to practise disinterestedness? Can we prove to him in any way that in so doing he is acting rationally and right? We must try to find some rational

¹ Cf. Wundt, "Ethik," Bd. II, S. 11, 132-133.

ground of morality, altruism, disinterestedness, sacrifice.

Egoism destroys confidence in fidelity in vocation, security in social intercourse, sacrifice for the country in time of war. It undermines the basis of society. If there is always to be a calculation on the basis of self-interest, the general well-being must speedily perish. We may well doubt that society could continue to exist if the interests of others held no power over men. The "war of all against all" would put an end to society. A certain amount of altruism is necessary to keep the world going. Egoism is plainly incompatible with the best social well-being; and there is great social necessity of finding some rational ground by which to lead a man from egoism to altruism, of finding some means of guarding and increasing the amount of altruism in the world.

We shall undertake an investigation of the various doctrines that have been proposed as solutions to this problem of converting egoism into altruism.

The limits and purposes of this investigation make it impossible to undertake expressly a consideration of those views which deny the possibility of any altruistic action, in some such terms as the following: "Man tends to seek his own individual happiness as truly and inevitably and without exception as a stone tends towards the earth. The fundamental and inviolable law of human nature is attachment to self, a tendency to persevere in being. Disinterestedness, benevolence, devotion, self-sacrifice, morality, are absolutely impossible; they are only seeming; the law of nature is self-

preservation; all occurrences in the world of life are in accordance with this law. Every living being strives, in everything it does, to preserve its life; it seeks everything that is promotive of this, and avoids everything that is detrimental to it; of course, it is not always actually successful in this attempt, but this is always its attempt. Every one strives for what is advantageous to self, without regarding whether the welfare of others is thereby furthered or hindered. The good of others is either not cared for, or is at most only secondary. Social virtues are practised merely because they have a tendency to produce beneficial results for the individual agent. The self is always the centre. It gives up one good only to obtain a greater good." Our concern here is to canvass the various attempts to convert egoism into altruism, and to discover, if possible, the rational justification of altruism. In pursuing this investigation we shall indirectly obtain light on this denial of the possibility of altruism, which we now pass over without consideration.

In order to unite personal interests with general interests the case is sometimes rested upon the economic facts of life. Economic forces are accredited the sole cause of the actions of men. For instance, Ghent, in his little book, "Mass and Class," says: "The expectation of profit is perhaps the most powerful of all known solvents of ethical standards. The beliefs which a class holds, as a result of its economic relations, are generally sincere beliefs, and are held, in the main, unconsciously of their determining cause. There is a spiritual alchemy which transmutes the base

metal of self-interest into the gold of conscience; the transmutation is real, and the resulting frame of mind is not hypocrisy, but conscience. . . . The code of each is based upon things more fundamental than ideas or sentiments. It is based upon the economic life.”¹ The strength of economic forces is illustrated in the following sentences: “Hardships of life may lead to the killing of infants or abandoning of aged parents or eating of human bodies; and necessity and the force of habit may deprive these actions of the stigma which would otherwise be attached to them. Economic conditions have influenced moral ideas relating, for instance, to slavery, labour, and cleanliness; whilst the form of marriage and the opinions concerning it have been largely determined by such a factor as the numerical proportion between the sexes.”² It might be said that only in the economic factors of life could the cause or justification of the passage from egoism to altruism be found. The individual needs his fellows to assist him in procuring food and shelter, in defending himself from wild beasts and inclement weather. Thus men are forced to render mutual assistance and to coöperate in numberless ways.

But if from one aspect economic interests unite men, from another aspect they separate men. When there is not enough food to suffice for all, struggle and warfare result. Economic facts alone are not sufficient to account for the passage from egoism to altruism, or to afford a rational ground

¹ Ghent, “Mass and Class,” pp. 101–102.

² Westermarck, “Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas,” Vol. II, p. 742.

for it. They cannot furnish an adequate basis for a theory of human obligation and conduct. We shall find them interlaced with some of the other theories, and need not delay here for their consideration.

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGY AND OBLIGATION

ONE important way of trying to get altruism out of egoism is to take recourse to theology and to appeal to a divine sanction. The ground for the transition from the pursuit of one's own interest to the pursuit of the interest of others is sought in the arbitrary command of God. Perhaps the most common answer that one would receive to the question, "Why is a given act right?" would be, "Because God commands it." It is a safe assumption that the majority of men, even though in practice they do not obey the commands of God, would yet say that the principles of morality are grounded in the will of God. And many of the world's great scholars cannot conceive any other foundation as suitable or safe.

According to this view, all man's duties are duties primarily to God, and to men only secondarily as the children of God. All right doing is such only as loyalty to the will of God, obedience to the divine command. The moral law is the will of God made known to his creatures, by which he imposes obligation upon them; that is, he necessitates them either to obey his command or be punished. Without the notion of God and Providence, there would be no moral law and obligation properly so called. Human laws derive authority from their

agreement with God's laws; if they do not accord with God's laws, they are void. Reason may indicate to us what is prudent or advantageous, but it imposes upon us no obligation to perform what it dictates. If it is not in line with what God commands, we may refuse to follow it. The reason of man has no independent validity and obligatory character. Its only function is that of ascertaining and applying the divine laws. Divine commands have been given for all occasions of life, and are to be ascertained in particular cases by searching the texts of Scripture. Only God's will determines what is right and what is wrong. If God had commanded it so, what is now right would be wrong, and what is now wrong would be right.

In our days but few men are disposed to close eyes and ears and to bow down reverently before what they are told is a mystery. Neither can philosophers or moral scientists hide their faces in their hands before such mysteries as appear in the above doctrine; but must undertake a critical examination to see if the commandment of God is the foundation of right and obligation.

How can we know the will of God? One sees readily that the theologians need to be wary about asserting the mysteriousness and incomprehensibility of God and his ways; else short work may be made of obligation with reference to God. If we have no definite knowledge of him, we can have no obligation towards him. Where all knowledge is lacking, obligation in the strict sense of the word ceases. Duty cannot be valid for us with reference to objects about which we have no knowledge, realms that lie beyond the limits of our

intelligence. We must know God and his will in some way, if his will is to have validity for us.

So the theologians are forced to say that God has revealed his will to us. But there are exceedingly great difficulties here also. We have no positive knowledge that God has revealed his will to men. The great difficulty here, however, is the unavoidable circle in the argument. The rightness of the revelation is attested by its divine origin, and its divine origin is attested by its rightness. How can any one offer the argument that the revealed Scriptures are right and morally obligatory because they come from God? There can be offered no other guarantee of their having come from God except their rightness. If one chooses to make the obligatory character of the Scriptures dependent upon their divine origin, then their divine origin is left without a base, and any one may say that the moral precepts in the Scriptures are not obligatory. No; the less unsatisfactory way is to say that the rightness of scriptural teachings is attested by man's own reason, and their rightness is a warrant for belief in their divinity. It is because the scriptural precepts are reasonable that we think ourselves justified in attributing them to God; it is not from their divine origin that we deduce their reasonableness and obligatory character.

Moreover, in what is offered as revelation there are many hard passages and many contradictions—how shall we distinguish “the will of God”? In the interpretation, the only appeal possible is to man's own reason.

But even if we suppose the revelation to come

from God, how do we know that it contains truth and salvation instead of falsehood and destruction? How do we know that God is truthful and good? How do we know but that his ways are really "not our ways" and he is using us as playthings for his sport? Our only argument for the moral nature of God is drawn from the moral nature of man. It is from man's goodness that we argue the goodness of God. Morality does not depend upon theology, but theology depends upon morality.

Even if we pass by these difficulties, there remain others just as great. Can the will of God produce real obligation? An external will may threaten or may constrain, but it can never obligate. It may be all-powerful, but this does not render obedience to it morally obligatory. An omnipotent will may be the basis for a principle of fear, but never for a principle of moral obligation. The all-powerful being may be the eternal physical matter of the materialists, or the nature-God of the pantheists, or the malevolent demon of some of the pessimists. His omnipotence does not prove his morality nor our moral obligation to obey him. It may be that we ought to revolt, that we ought to do the contrary of what he wishes, that we ought to do our best to defeat his plans. If he says, "Do what I wish and be what I wish," we may reply, "If your morality is different from ours, we will not." Obedience would be immoral, and revolt moral, if this external will were maleficent.

It may be said that God is our creator; but neither would this render his command the foundation of obligation. He made us such as we are; being such as we are, we find the basis of right in

our reason. It is our concern to act according to the light we have. If in doing the best we know, we also fulfil his will, well and good; but if not, also well and good. It is our affair only to act as best we can in accordance with our nature, that is, to follow the rule of reason. To the scientific mind, the physical cosmogony of the Book of Genesis does not seem any more fabulous than this moral cosmogony (of the Bible and even of many present-day theologians) which attributes to the arbitrary will of God the existence and laws of the moral world.

We do not see how love for God can precede, and be the basis of, love for man. "If man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" If we cannot love our fellows for their own sakes, how can we love them because God says love them? We know our fellows' goodness and lovableness, but not so God's. We have to infer his from man's.

Thus we must conclude that we are not obligated to obey God's will simply because it is his will. We recognize the rightness of his will only because we believe him good and his commands in accordance with the commands of our own good reason. The validity of religious precepts is based upon their being an embodiment of formulas of action which man's reason has sanctioned. The moral consciousness of man is the starting-point. Even if the Christian Scriptures contained an actual revelation of God's will, they would lack a moral sanction until the content of the revelation had been received and assimilated into the personal life of the individual and thus reënforced. The

laws of God cannot become laws to man until man has legislated them for himself.

Into the positive relation between morality and religion we cannot now enter. The preceding discussion has not meant to say that morality does not receive great help from a pure religion, from its faiths, consolations, and cheer. It has meant to say that religion is not necessary to ground morality, and that the command of God is not the foundation of obligation. A man may be an agnostic in religious matters and yet be a highly moral man. Reason suffices to command us; and obligation as such does not need a transcendental and external will to furnish its validity. The law of God is incapable of grounding obligation. The divine command which we place above us is in us, and God is the ideal which we impose upon the universe.

If any one who has been in the habit of regarding the laws of morality as arbitrary commands of a deity who would punish him if he disobeyed those laws, should finally come to the conclusion that the existence of such a deity is doubtful or that his power is not supreme, then such a person would probably regard the laws of morality as no longer binding. And he might take an especial delight in violating them, out of spite for the past obedience which was enforced by fear of the deity. Such a danger can be met only through the more sensible teaching to our children that the moral laws are not commands of an arbitrary will, but are grounded in the nature of man and his world, and are for the welfare of man.

We are not to think of the moral law as an ex-

ternal and arbitrary imposition upon a human will, but rather as expressing the essential conditions of perfect human living. A moral law declares the conditions of successful living and not an adventitious legislation. It exists for the sake of the life to which it ministers. Further, we are not to regard the penalties of the law as an arbitrary annex, but rather as an organic consequence. There is no formal legislation in the moral universe, but there is a great moral order where evil tends to death and righteousness tends to life.

Ladd's book on the "Philosophy of Conduct" may be taken as one of the most important of recent works that would ground morality upon theology.¹

"The Ground of Morality for man must be found in the World-Ground conceived of as an ethical personality, as the ideally righteous and holy God." ²

"Without admitting that conception of God as the World-Ground which the most mature reflective consciousness of humanity presents, the foundations of morality are left totally unexplained." ³

"All the more necessary is it, therefore, so to conceive of the origin of this human moral nature, of its reactions upon its environment, and of its progress and its achievements, — so to shape, in a word, the explanation of all that is distinctively ethical in human experience, — as to bring it into the fullest harmony with all our other most trustworthy conceptions of Reality. This, I assert, can be done only by identifying the Ground of Morality with the World-Ground. And such an identification is possible only if the World-Ground be conceived of as the absolute moral Person, the ultimate Source of all

¹ See especially the chapter on "The Ground of Morality and the World-Ground."

² Ladd, "Philosophy of Conduct," p. 590.

³ p. 602.

the ethical life and ethical development of humanity.”¹

“Any historical process like the moral development of humanity is proof of the presence in the world of a rational Will, which is working in the interests of moral values, and which is establishing over all moral selves the regency of moral standards in the only way in which such establishing is possible. For, in the progress of morality, man must accomplish the Divine Will by making that Will man’s own; in other words, the Divine standards of righteousness and of virtuous living must be made universally effective by the work of God in human ethical history, as mere ‘cosmic processes’ or ‘external Utilitarian’ considerations alone cannot make them, even although working in conjunction with influences from these processes and these considerations.”²

“Thus religion regards the raising and the spreading of the standards of morality among men as due to the efficient activity of God, in providence, revelation, and inspiration.”³

“The ultimate sanctions of morality must be located in the authority of an ideally righteous and holy Will that is realizing its own Ideas in the historical process of human moral development.”⁴

“When the demand is made that I, the individual person, shall sacrifice my immediate or more distant sentient good in the interests of the common good, an underlying substantial Ground seems necessary in order to justify the obligatory character of such a demand. . . . One may not be ready to accept the claim that no sanctions for an altruistic ethics — *i.e.* for genuine morality at all — are tenable which do not found themselves in belief in God, and in the oneness of all finite souls in God. . . . But if such a form of

stating the truth seems somewhat too abstract and other-worldly, this is no legitimate reason for overlooking the plain facts of the case, or for refusing to face the mysterious and profound problem which the attempt to explain the facts presents."¹

"I believe, then, that no satisfactory account is possible for the reflective and speculative treatment of the sanctions of human moral life which does not find the ground of these sanctions in the World-Ground."²

To the last statement we reply that it is not a "speculative" treatment of the ground of obligation that most of us desire. We want a "scientific" or "positive" treatment of the matter. If we ask Ladd what is the result of his "speculations" concerning the *nature* of the World-Ground, he replies thus: "What are we warranted in affirming as defensible knowledge regarding the Being of the World-Ground? . . . What philosophy calls the Absolute or the World-Ground is Will, informed and guided by Reason, and immanent as progressively realizing its own Ideas in all that of which we have experience. . . . Our human way of knowing the World-Ground is *a way of conceiving the 'Being of the World' after the analogy of the Life of a Self, as a striving toward a completer self-realization under the consciously accepted motif of immanent Ideas*. The principle, as a postulate of all reasoning, and so of all science, implies (1) some sort of unitary Being for the really existent; (2) that this Being is Will; (3) that the differentiation of the activity of this Will, and the connection of the differentiated 'momenta,' — the separate beings of the world, is teleological and rational

¹ p. 625.

² p. 624

like that of our own Self. In one word, the Being of the World, the World-Ground, is a rational Will, everywhere and always energizing for the realizing of its own ideas. The Absolute is a Self: all the seeming separate beings and happenings of which man has experience have their ground in this Absolute Self.”¹

From a consideration of Ladd's procedure it is evident that he infers the nature of God from the nature of man, and then wishes to ground moral obligation and the explanation of all man's moral life in that speculative nature of God. He forgets that what he has represented as being the nature of God is only an inference from the nature of man. He makes a fanciful creature and then bows down to it and says, “Thou art my God; rule over me.” Which is greater, the maker or the made? How can the foundations of morality be explained by this World-Ground, when the World-Ground itself is explained by the nature of man? There is no way of our knowing the “nature and will of God,” except through our own interpretation of what they ought to be, judged by our own standards of good and right. The only real argument that we have for the moral nature of God is the argument from the moral nature of man. Now, how can Ladd make the moral nature of man dependent upon the moral nature of God? A description of the nature of the World-Ground can be only a matter of faith. Ladd gives expression to his faith. Others have expressed their belief that the World-Ground is bad, wicked, malicious; while others have believed it to be altogether unin-

¹ p. 598.

telligent; and still others have believed that there is no World-Ground. No particular belief in the nature of the World-Ground can be shown to be "morally obligatory." And most assuredly is it foolishness to claim that some particular faith in the nature of the World-Ground is the *ground of moral obligation*. Yet Ladd first gives us the results of his *speculations* concerning the nature of the World-Ground, and then tells us that this World-Ground is the ground of moral obligation. But no speculation can be a valid ground of obligation.

In criticising the "natural world" of the scientists, Ladd says, "He should have no difficulty with any of the stories of the wonders wrought by Aladdin's lamp who professes to understand how a World absolutely indifferent to distinctions of moral worth could give rise to an ethico-social being like man, and to his ethical and social development."¹ Ladd has no more right to speak of "the scientists' world" as "absolutely indifferent to distinctions of moral worth" than the scientist has to speak of Ladd's "God" or "World-Ground" as "absolutely indifferent to distinctions of moral worth." The chief error lies in Ladd's wishing us to regard "nature" and "the natural" with man left out. When man is included as part of nature, there is no need of God to account for all the betterment and moral progress of the world. Ethical facts are natural facts and are products of man's nature, products of man's natural good-will. We say that "the moral development of humanity is proof of the presence in the world," not "of the

¹ p. 606.

will of God working in the interest of moral values," as Ladd says, but "of the good wills of men working out their moral aims." Instead of saying that "in the process of morality men must accomplish the Divine Will," we say that men are accomplishing their own wills to live their largest lives.

What drives the theologians to their doctrines? Their false view of the nature of man. They regard man as needing some external constraint which compels him to "believe in the value, respect the sanctions, and safeguard the principles of moral conduct." But external constraint is destructive of the very thing which the theologians bring it in to safeguard, as was shown earlier in this chapter. Morality must be free and spontaneous conduct of the individual. And we assert against these Calvinistic champions of the natural depravity of man that man, natural man, is good. Natural normal man loves his fellows, and identifies their good with his own. The only "spiritual ideals and motives" that we know are those of human beings. Ladd has no right to say that they are not "natural," but come from God. Man creates his own standard. He makes, in the progress of his own evolution, the laws which he follows as morally right. He is his own moral lawgiver.

An appeal to religious sanctions for altruism merely covers over the difficulty. The motive that inspires one to obey the divine command to serve others may spring from an egoistic desire, namely, the desire to avoid the pains threatened for disobeying the divine command, or to attain the rewards promised for obedience. The religious

sanction is the fear of punishment and the hope of reward. Even Christianity has essentially been regarded as a means of gaining a blessed hereafter. But if any one serves his fellows under such motives, he is still egoistic. It is impossible to get pure altruism out of a command to love others. The individual must be already "good" before he will obey the command. No law can make a man altruistic or make him regard and treat others as part of himself and one with himself. If he does not naturally love others, it is useless and hopeless to command him to love them.

The individual can and must dispute the *right* of God morally to obligate him. God may be said to be able to *constrain* man by force or might, but he may not be said to *obligate him morally*. To represent men as subjects of a God who commands them to love one another is most assuredly not to represent them as subjects of "moral obligation." The religious sanction is utterly incapable of being the basis of morality.

Ladd has well expressed the impossibility of man's being morally obligated to obey external might conceived as "nature" and the "laws of nature." He ought to have said precisely the same things with reference to "God" and the "laws of God." In the following quotation, substitute in place of nature, God, and in place of the laws of nature, the laws of God. "Nature encompasses me, hems me in, assists me at times and thwarts and punishes me at others. I must obey her laws, because without this I cannot even exist, much less attain any of my ends or enjoy any of her privileges. . . . But what *right* to command — right, such as be-

longs to the very idea of an ethical sanction — can be conceived of in the name of a purely cosmic or natural process? Suppose that I choose to disobey nature ; you may threaten me with impersonal cosmic processes, but you cannot appeal in their name to my feeling of obligation. The ruling natural forces may grind me to powder, but they shall not make me bow before their right to command. The laws of nature may compel my obedience, but they cannot compel a moral respect for themselves.”¹ All these objections against the “laws of nature” hold good as truly against the “laws of God.” In the end, a true appeal can never go beyond one’s own self. The individual’s own will and judgment is the final court of appeal in all moral matters.

The existence of God would doubtless be a great advantage for men; and we may wish it with all our hearts. However improbable it may appear to us, it appears infinitely desirable. Still, with reference to grounding obligation in God and his will, we must maintain that it cannot be done. “We have no more right to appeal to God as the cause in morals than in physics. Both the natural law and the moral law may point to something beyond them, to something transcendent. But we cannot assume the transcendent in order to deduce from it the facts of experience; we must seek for the explanation within the empirical world.”²

The theological mode of procedure really gives up the attempt at a rational explanation and takes refuge in something transcendental, inexplicable,

¹ Ladd, *op. cit.*, pp. 616-617.

² Paulsen, “System of Ethics,” tr. Thilly, p. 341.

mysterious, unintelligible, conjectural. It gives up the search for a natural explanation and justification, and accepts a supernatural one. It calls in the divine to heal a breach in the human. It implicitly asserts the impossibility of explaining and justifying the transformation of egoism into altruism. The attempt at a natural and human reconciliation between egoism and altruism is abandoned, and recourse is had to a command of God and to religious sanctions. But it is doubtful whether the idea of God is not out of place in a treatise on ethics that attempts a *scientific* explanation of morality or a rational ground of obligation. To say that God makes right right and wrong wrong by an arbitrary fiat is simply to give up the problem and declare it insoluble, and also to imply that obligation is not justifiable to reason. But a law for reason without reason is contradictory.

CHAPTER III

METAPHYSICS AND OBLIGATION

THE metaphysical way of leading an egoist to become an altruist denies the efficacy of a method entirely scientific and positive, that is, resting solely on the facts of experience. It rests upon "ulterior principles," hypotheses which escape verification in experience, such as the existence or non-existence of an absolute good, the immortality or non-immortality of the human person, the possibility or impossibility of an indefinite progress, and the final and universal triumph of justice and the right. It makes obligation depend upon some ontological consideration of the nature of the human person, or the essential superiority of thought and truth, or the ultimate destiny of the individual, the race, and the universe, or the nature of the Ultimate Reality and the relation in which man's moral life stands to it; and it estimates other things as fit to be entirely disregarded or even denied an existence.

Two or three examples of metaphysical ethics may be examined somewhat in detail. The chief place has to be assigned to Kant's ethics. Instead of making the right dependent upon the good, Kant made the good dependent upon the right. He established the right *a priori*, as a dictate of the pure reason, and claimed for it a validity that is absolute and unconditional. According

to Kant, the moral law may not contain any matter from the world of sense, for the objects of sense are not moral; it may be only formal. The only thing suitable for the use of moral concepts is the rationalism of the judgment, which takes from the world of sense-experience merely what pure reason may also conceive by itself, that is, the purely legislative form. Kant says, "It is of extreme importance to remember that we must not allow ourselves to think of deducing the reality of the moral principle from the *particular attributes of human nature*. For duty must be an unconditional necessity of action."¹ "All moral conceptions have their seat and origin completely *a priori* in the reason, and that, moreover, in the commonest reason just as truly as in that which is in the highest degree speculative."² "Not only are moral laws with their principles essentially distinguished from every other kind of practical knowledge in which there is anything empirical, but all moral philosophy rests wholly on its pure part. When applied to man, it does not borrow the least thing from the knowledge of man himself (anthropology), but gives laws *a priori* to him as a rational being."³

Kant taught that the "ought" is not derived from a real fact, but from an idea that is not yet real, but ought nevertheless to be made real for itself and not for something else. Instead of an ought derived from a good, as when one says

¹ Kant, "Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten," Werke, herausgegeben von der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Bd IV (1903), S 425.

² *Ibid.*, S 411.

³ *Ibid.*, S. 389.

"to cure yourself of a fever you ought to take quinine," he championed an ought that is primary and absolute, imposing itself upon the will by itself, and not in virtue of any prior fact of which it is a consequence or to which it serves as a means. He says that the obligation of the moral laws is recognized at once as absolute. A proof of the rightness of these laws or a ground of their obligation is neither proper nor possible. Certain acts are unconditionally right and obligatory. He held that we know the form of the moral law, and that we know it necessarily, but that we do not know and cannot know the principle, ground, or reason of it. It is a necessary and unconditional imperative, imposed by pure reason.¹ In brief, then, Kant championed the absoluteness of the moral law, a pure formalism, obligation valid by itself, a categorical imperative.

In criticism of this doctrine, we point out that a theory which champions an *a priori* duty cannot admit conflicts of duties or ignorance and indecision concerning what ought to be done. If a man says that he has not an *a priori* certitude concerning what his duty is, the Kantians may not say that in this case he is excused from obligation; neither may they attempt to show him by reasonable demonstration from experience what his duty is. They can only say that in making this statement he either lies, or thereby shows that he is not a rational being; for they claim that every rational being knows *a priori* what his duty is.²

¹ Cf. Kant, "Kritik der praktischen Vernunft," Werke, Bd. V (1908), S. 46-50.

² Kant, "Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten," Werke, Bd. IV, S. 411.

Of course a mere schoolboy thinks that lying and stealing are wrong, just as he thinks that drinking alcohol and touching electric wires are harmful. But knowledge of either must be based upon experience of the facts in their relation to human life, moral or physical. And judgments concerning them are always relative; for these things do not always and everywhere have the same effects, but vary according to conditions and circumstances of various kinds. Just as the youth cannot know *a priori* that drinking alcohol exerts a disorganizing influence upon the physical organism, but learns it by seeing this effect upon animals, other persons, or himself, so also he cannot know *a priori* that lying and stealing disorganize man's moral life, but finds it out in seeing the effects of these courses of action in society. Just as the physiological commands may not be blindly received as *a priori* commands, unconditional or categorical imperatives, so too the moral commands may not be blindly received as *a priori* commands, unconditional or categorical imperatives. Both are to be grounded in the facts of experience. Long years of observation and experiment have given to physiological commands definiteness and foundation, and have also improved and completed them. The same thing remains to be done with reference to the moral commands. It needs to be shown that certain ways of acting which have hitherto been instinctive or habitual, or regarded as commanded by a deity, are well adapted to the conservation and enlargement of man's moral life, and that others are ill adapted. It needs to be more clearly shown how such things as lying,

theft, corruption, and adultery harm the individual and society, while their opposites conserve and strengthen them. Suppose that experience gave undoubted assurance that lying was necessary for human welfare, that instead of undermining the structure of the rational selfhood, destroying self-respect, leading to hatred and treachery, exerting a harmful influence upon the other related and interdependent parts of the individual's life, and instead of destroying social confidence and undermining social relations, it had just the opposite effects, being advantageous to the individual and society in every way, — would its wrongness still be known *a priori*?

"You ought not to lie," is not an *a priori* command, but is dependent (1) upon the subject's having intelligence, (2) upon his living in society, (3) upon his ability to communicate with others, (4) upon his interpreting thoughts by language, (5) upon his having some interest in disguising truth, (6) upon his having a nature such as to be affected by such interests, and (7) upon his being capable of choosing between truth and falsehood in particular circumstances. All these are empirical elements. The very idea of duty in general, "I ought," is dependent upon one's having a dual nature to such an extent that its parts may be in disaccord, the inclinations not agreeing with reason's dictates.¹

An absolute duty is indeterminable. No definite content can be given to it; and for all practical purposes it is equal to x or to zero. A will that

¹ Cf. Fouillée, "Critique des systèmes de morale contemporains," p. 141.

wills, or a reason that considers, nothing determinate, nothing particular, nothing comprehensible in experience, may be called absolute, or it may be called a nullity. Such a will or such a reason is so *pure* that it is empty and ceases to exist. A thought without an object, a pure thought, is no longer a thought, and not even the form of a thought. Likewise, a moral imperative as pure form, without any content, is not an imperative, and not even the form of an imperative.

Reason is not independent of experience, and does not, through a process of self-regarding dialectic, arrive at conclusions which must be regarded as laws for man's conduct. It cannot command as pure form. It commands only in view of considerations which are its content and matter. It must receive its standard of measurement from the will, and must receive its objects to be measured from experience.

Reason is the psychological activity of comparison, reflection, abstraction, generalization, etc., and must have objects. A law given by "pure reason," instead of being certain and obligatory in and by itself, is simply empty of all significance. There can be no duty, no right, no obligation, "in itself," that is, having no reference to a human end. Reason's law must be to man and for man and under certain conditions and concerning certain things. It must have a reference to the objects of experience and to ends that are willed. An obligation for the denizens of earth must vouch for its authority by the facts of earth. If an imperative cannot be shown to be obligatory by the world of experience, it cannot be shown to be obligatory

in the world of experience. A moral law that is to regulate human life in the world of experience cannot offer credentials from some unknown world, a *noumenal* world, an "*intelligibele Welt*"; or it may be told in polite language that its credentials cannot be recognized in this known world, the phenomenal world, the "*sensibele Welt*," and that it must furnish other security. Not many banks would lend money to a stranger who said that the indorser of his note was an inhabitant of some planet other than the earth, no matter how much credit he was reported to have there. Neither can any credit be given to a moral imperative whose ground is reported to be beyond experience, or *noumenal*. We deny to any law the right to command morally without giving a reason and basing that reason on the facts of experience; and we do this, not in the name of "pure reason," but in the name of rational *will*. There can be no moral obligation upon man that is without condition, and that is not based upon man's welfare. Any law that would command him may be asked to show its credentials, and to convince his reason and will that the command has a foundation in his good.

A moral imperative as pure form, that is, without a foundation in the good, is insufficient. The good must give to it a content and objective foundation. To say that an imperative is good because we ought to do it, is beginning at the wrong end. Something is first shown in experience to be good, and then and therefore obligatory. The good does not depend upon the obligatory, and the obligatory upon the good; but the

obligatory depends upon the good, and the good upon man's will and the facts of experience. Through will and experience we arrive at the good, and through the good we arrive at the right or obligatory.

Any obligatory imperative must express a reasonable relation between the conduct commanded and some end that is willed. Reason declares that certain conduct is adapted to secure a certain end,—in morality a good, or perhaps even what is conceived as the highest or greatest good,—and this obligates the agent to that conduct. It is evident that there must be a willed end, reason, and the possibility of conduct. All three of these are necessary. Without any one of these there could not be any moral obligation. Kant recognized only the second of these three. It seems that he lost sight of the necessity of the willed end to ground obligation, and regarded the possibility of conduct (freedom) as a necessary postulate although otherwise inconceivable. He grounded obligation merely upon the declaration of reason, which declaration was not dependent upon anything else, but was absolute, unconditional, known *a priori*. He says, "The ground of obligation must not be sought in the nature of man, or in the circumstances of the world in which he is placed, but *a priori* simply in the conceptions of pure reason."¹ But in the view that is urged here, an end, something represented as good to and for the will, is necessary. Reason obligates not by its mere form. It must have a content. And in the case of conduct, the content is the adaptation of

¹ Kant, *op. cit.*, Bd. IV, S. 389.

the conduct to the attainment of an end conceived as a good of the will. An end or good is conditioned upon the will; and the adaptation of the means to the end is known to reason only through experience. This view is utterly opposed to the theory that makes the origin of the moral law "purely in reason and without any admixture of empirical elements," and holds that it is "an apodictic proposition and a categorical imperative."¹

Does not Kant's "categorical imperative" really rest upon an empirical supposition, even though he may not have thought so? "If you wish to live in society, you wish the natural conditions of society: therefore, you ought not to lie. Who wishes the end, wishes the means." The ultimate basis is always one of human will and utility. The motives must be taken from actual human nature. Pure *a priori* forms have to be abandoned, and appeal must be made to the objects of experience. One must suppose first the *will* to live in society, and may then seek the conditions of the social state, — veracity, fidelity in contracts, etc. In every so-called "categorical" imperative there is a condition, — usually the will to be a member of a social group. The basis must be taken in the will of man and in the nature of the world of experience.

As a further consequence, the representation of a good which an obligatory imperative must contain gives to the imperative a character of relativity. If the right is based upon the good, it can never be absolute, imposing itself as unconditional instead of as a means to an end. To

² *Ibid.*, S. 415-416.

attain a given end, a certain means is necessary, and therefore ought to be chosen. But the end is given by the particular nature or will, as a fact of experience, something relative and variable, thus entailing the relativity of the duty dependent upon it. If we say that "duty for duty's sake" is an empty and meaningless expression, if we demand the good as the basis of our faith in duty, if we demand a content for the form, a picture for the frame, a body for the shadow, an end for the means, we must not say that duty is absolute and unconditional. The good itself upon which the right is made to rest is a natural good and cannot be absolute, for it resolves into elements of experience and depends upon the particular nature to and for which it is a good. The end or the good may be satisfaction of the sensibility, pleasure, happiness, pleasure for the race, intrinsic individual perfection, perfection of mankind, etc. "If you will this, (pleasure, happiness, perfection, human welfare, etc.), you ought to do that." Whoever wills the end wills the means necessary for its attainment. Since the end or good is a datum of experience and variable or contingent, the imperative dependent upon it is contingent, relative, and hypothetical. Still further, we cannot be absolutely certain of the consequences of actions; and this uncertainty as to the effects of actions also entails relativity in obligation. Since our knowledge of the relations of means to ends is never certain, conduct, for that reason alone, is necessarily an uncertain venture, relative, and not a matter of absolute obligation.

Thus we may have a real ground of obligation

without having reached the ultimate ground of obligation in the metaphysical sense of these words. The case is the same with reference to particular ends and the ultimate end of action. It is not allowable to say that there is no real aim of action except the ultimate aim. Perhaps only few persons ever even think of an ultimate goal. Daily life goes on with reference to near-by ends. Furthermore, any object that is sought, not as a means to some other end, but for itself, may be said to be an ultimate end of action. For this particular person at this particular time under these particular circumstances, it is a real ultimate end. It is desired, not as a means, but in and for itself. It will be said that such a simple end must not be conceived as ultimate — it is “relative,” not “absolute.” We reply that in this world of particulars, particular persons, particular things, particular and changing conditions, particular times, etc., only such particular and relative ends may be desired and striven for. Of the absolute end in the strict metaphysical sense we profess ignorance, and are so far from regarding it as the only real aim that we regard it as an impossible one. We regard any aim as capable of being supplanted by some more remote goal, or, in other words, as particular and relative, and only as such real. Such relative ends, idealized from experience, are much more appropriate as guides of action than the refined ethereal abstractions put forth by some metaphysicians as “the ultimate end of action.”

Notice the way in which Kant proves the existence of an absolute or ultimate end. “Reason-

able beings are not simply subjective ends, whose existence has a worth *for us* as an effect of our actions; but they are *objective ends*, that is to say, things whose existence is by itself an end, and an end which no one can subordinate to any other by relation to which it would be only a means. Otherwise nothing whatever would possess *absolute worth*.”¹ The last sentence contains the question under investigation. How can he base his argument upon the very thing that is in question? He says further, in the same connection, “If every value were conditional, and consequently contingent, then there would be no supreme practical principle of reason whatever.” Very well. That is what this treatise is contending for here, that we can get along and must get along without any. Kant’s argument could be stated clearly in the following circle: “There is an absolute practical principle, if there exists an ultimate end to ground it; there exists an ultimate end, for if there were none there would be no absolute practical principle.”²

In human life, then, ends are always relative, — particular ends of particular persons at particular times under particular circumstances, — and capable of being supplanted by some other ends. If the end has always a relative value, a man is bound to the means only in as much as he wills to attain the end. Hence no imperative can be absolute or categorical.³

¹ Kant, *op. cit.*, Bd. IV, S. 428.

² Cf. Fouillée, “Critique des systèmes de morale contemporains,” p. 228.

³ For a good statement of the relativity of all criteria of

Kant interpreted the will as "autonomous," and yet he believed in the unity and universality of the moral law — that every one ought to conform to a universal and unchangeable law. But real "autonomy" produces individual originality instead of universal uniformity. Each individual makes his own belief and his own law. There is room for great diversity in the actions of men and in the ideals followed.

According to Kant the moral imperatives have not the character of psychological motives, since the latter always have an empirical feeling content and have reference to some end or object. Moral imperatives are regarded as purely intellectual commands, independent of outer or inner causes and conditions. Kant's method has an abstract and exclusively metaphysical character, rejecting all psychology and, in general, all anthropology. "It is of the utmost necessity to construct a pure moral philosophy, perfectly cleared of everything which is only empirical, and which belongs to anthropology."¹ According to him, before empirical physics there should be placed a metaphysics of nature, and before practical anthropology there should be placed a metaphysics of conduct, and of such a sort as scrupulously to remove every empirical element.² Kant's bringing together of morality and physics in this way makes us see more clearly the faultiness of an *a priori* method, for we cannot admit a metaphysics of nature, constructed *a priori* out of pure reason without any appeal to experience.

right, even of those that profess to be absolute, see Small, "The Significance of Sociology for Ethics," pp. 12-13.

¹ Kant, *op. cit.*, Bd IV, S. 389.

² *Ibid.*, S. 388.

Pure reason, truly reduced to itself, could accomplish nothing towards finding the ideas of matter, force, heat, light, motion, and their laws. Neither can we admit it to be possible to construct a *pure* moral science and philosophy, entirely independent of any empirical element belonging to anthropology, psychology, and sociology.¹

The absolute and *a priori* character of the dictates of man's pure practical reason is shown to be false: (1) by a historical criticism of moral ideas both in the individual and in the race, like that made by Darwin and Spencer, Westermarck and Hobhouse, showing how an individual and social need has become an instinct; (2) by a psychological and physiological criticism that reduces those complex phenomena called categorical imperatives to their psychological elements or even to their physiological elements; and (3) by a sociological criticism that examines the necessity of a pure practical reason for individual and social conduct.²

How can the form of the law be said to constitute the moral imperative? Every form *a priori* is a framework inherent in our mental constitution, like space and time, and this framework is a necessity. But a moral imperative is not at all like these ideas of space and time. A moral law is not regarded as a necessity, a fatality, inherent in the very constitution of the mind or perhaps in the structure of the brain. If the moral law is similar to the laws of space and time, what sense is there in calling upon us to bow down before it, adore it, or obey it? I do not need to know why I am

¹ Cf. Fouillée, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134.

constrained by my constitution to the framework of space and time, because this does not concern myself as cause, and I am not responsible for it. It concerns an intuition that is a necessity of my constitution. In this realm there is externality, heteronomy, fatality. But in the realm of morality, Kant pretends that it is I who am cause, it is I who act, it is I who give the law, it is I who execute it; nevertheless, he makes of this law a fatal form like that of space or time. He makes of my liberty an unknowable cause, the effects of which I submit to in the only world known to me, that of phenomena. He makes of my reason a reason that does not see the grounds of its choice, that not only does not know why it determined itself in such and such a way, but does not even know why it did not determine the phenomena in some other way.¹

Any "categorical" imperative is either "phenomenal" or "noumenal." In the first case, the ground of obligation is a fact of experience, which, as has been shown, renders obligation entirely relative instead of absolute or categorical. In the second case, it is a mystery. If the ground of obligation is placed in the noumenal world, how can its applications be placed in the phenomenal world? If duty is noumenal, how can duties be phenomenal? How can the passage be made from the realm of the noumena to the realm of experience? How can there be any concrete relations between the morality of the noumenal world and the morality of the world of experience? Man as phenomenal is not obligated, according to Kant, but

¹ Cf. Fouillée, *op cit.*, pp. 175-176.

is necessitated. In fact, he is not free as regards himself, neither as regards other beings, neither as regards his noumenal self. It does not depend upon him to modify himself, nor to execute the orders which he receives. This is the province of the noumenal self. The phenomenal self is not obligated, but is constrained.

Consistency in his doctrines would have forced Kant to say that we are physically what the physical universe has made us, and metaphysically what the noumenon has made us.¹ If we are what our noumenal selves have made us, our work in this world consists only in fulfilling our destiny automatically and fatally. Precepts, exhortations, commands, are vain. The phenomenal self is not free, and cannot be obligated. The empirical character is but the manifestation or work of the intelligible character, which is the creation of the noumenon. It is the noumenon alone that is responsible, alone being free; and it is to the noumenon alone that duty or obligation is at all applicable. But neither can the noumenal self be obligated. It cannot be obligated with reference to itself, because the eternal self, free from the very nature of its essence, is eternally moral. Any pure reason is naturally reasonable and correct. For a pure reason like that of the noumenal self, there can be no duty or obligation; there can be only immediate morality or perfect purity and goodness. Thus the noumenal self is not properly obligated in relation to itself. Nor can we say that it is obligated with reference to the phenomenal self, in the sense that it ought to produce a phenomenal self conformable to the noumenal self. If the noumenal

¹ This paragraph discussing the moral relation between the noumenal and phenomenal selves is taken with few changes except abridgment from Fouillée's "Critique," pp. 166-170.

self is free and an efficient cause, and moral, what hinders it from manifesting itself as it is? If it does not manifest itself as it is, if it does not impose the laws of reason upon the sensibility, this can be only because it is hindered from doing so by some "obstacle" foreign to itself, by some external restriction. But if the obstacle and restriction come from without, then the noumenal self is not free in its action, and consequently is not obligated. The obstacle and restriction cannot come from the noumenon and be its own work. Such an obstacle and restriction brought by the pure reason to hinder its own manifestation would be without reason, and would suppose a reason not pure, which is contradictory. A pure moral reason may not be an impure immoral reason. A will that makes its law for itself cannot make a bad law for itself; for Kant has demonstrated that autonomy is identical with morality. Thus the pure will of the noumenal self is not truly obligated — it is impeccable. The only resource of the Kantians is to admit a radical sin of the noumenal self, an incomprehensible fall of will and reason, an immoral act of the pure morality, an unreasonable action of the pure reason, manifesting itself in the world of sense by phenomena which are not what they ought to be by relation to their transcendental cause. Unfortunately this mystery is not only a mystery; it is also a contradiction. A pure freedom which, independently of any external obstacle, fell and made a phenomenon in opposition to itself, may be conceived only as a freedom of indifference and indetermination, enveloping contraries, and able to realize one rather than the other without reason and without law. But Kant has demonstrated that a liberty without law is an absurdity, and that, moreover, a liberty which itself made the law for itself could make only a moral law and could act only according to that law. How then can he get out of this dilemma? The

radical sin is not only a radical mystery, but a radical absurdity. To say nothing of founding obligation upon a mystery, to found it upon an absurdity is certainly to give it an unsatisfactory foundation. So from no point of view in the Kantian system is obligation possible, either on the part of phenomenal man relatively to himself or to his noumenal self, or on the part of the noumenal man relatively to himself or to his phenomenal self. It is vain to try to establish between noumenal man and phenomenal man any relation of duty or obligation. Each one remains what it is, the one immovably necessitated, the other immovably free. Kant placed liberty in a transcendental world, and it is therefore necessary to place there also duty or obligation. But obligation has no meaning in that world where the ideal is one with the real. In short, Kant admits liberty in order to render morality possible. But liberty as he understands it renders morality possible only there where it already exists and is not needed, that is, in pure reason and the world of noumena; and it does not render morality possible here where it is needed, that is, in our particular actions and in the world of phenomena.

It is a glorious fancy of most metaphysical moralists that the reality of man's moral life and moral development begins in, and is encompassed by, a larger reality, that the individual's life is a part of a larger life, and hence that there cannot be any real opposition between the interests of one and the interests of all. This is offered as the conciliation between sacrifice and interest. In working for the good of the Absolute, the individual is working for his own good. In serving the Absolute, the individual serves also himself. The true interests of all are in perfect agreement. It is in the name of this

faith, which lays the moral aim or end of action in the entirety or universality of rational beings, that the individual is called upon to sacrifice his "apparent" interest for the "real" interest of the whole. Now, we need not offer the objection that the basis of nature is a competitive struggle for existence, but may content ourselves with the objection that every apparently universal good dissolves into a sum of separate goods, each one of which exists in the good of an individual. "Humanity" consists of individual persons; "society" consists of its individual members; the whole is there only in its parts. What is "society" to the individual? The other individuals! "The universal society" is an abstract conception, and has no other existence. "The universal self" is a meaningless jumble of words. There is no reality answering to the term. The individuals are the only realities. Service is rendered to the whole only if it is rendered to all the individual parts. Now if there is no good except that which is found in the well-being of individuals, then the criterion of moral value for each one must lie in the maximum of individual well-being. It is impossible to see why any one should sacrifice his happiness in favor of an abstraction, a "universality."

Thus, when metaphysics demands sacrifice in the name of "the universal good," we champion the cause of individualism; we deny the reality of "a universal good" as anything different from the good of the separate individuals who make up the totality of the beings who enjoy the good.

Schopenhauer held that the individual is to

be accounted of no value; the real value is possessed by the Absolute, the one underlying will. He said that it is only for the "phenomenal" self that individuality is of value. For the real self individuality is of no consequence. The individual might very well sacrifice himself in order that the others might live, since in reality he lives in them; that is, the one real will lives in all. He says, "The good man sees that the distinction between himself and others, which to the bad man is so great a gulf, only belongs to a fleeting and illusive phenomenon. He recognizes directly and without reasoning that the in-itself of his own manifestation is also that of others, namely, the will to live, which constitutes the essence of everything and lives in all. . . . To him who does works of love the veil of *Mâyâ* has become transparent, the illusion of the *principium individuationis* has left him. He recognizes himself, his will, in every being. . . . The satisfaction which we experience after every disinterested deed arises from the fact that such a deed proceeds from the direct recognition of our own inner nature in the phenomenon of another, the knowledge that our true self exists not only in our own person, this particular manifestation, but in everything that lives."¹ "To be just, noble, and benevolent is nothing else than to translate my metaphysics into actions. . . . All true virtue proceeds from the direct and intuitive knowledge of the metaphysical identity of all beings. . . . Just on this account it is not the result of a special excellence

¹Schopenhauer, "Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung," herausgegeben von Frauenstädt, 1891, Bd. I, S. 440-441.

of intellect; on the contrary, even the weakest intellect is sufficient to see through the *principium individuationis*, which is what is required in this matter. . . . The doctrine of metempsychosis makes my true inner nature exist in others only after my death, while, according to the truth, it already lives in them now, and death merely removes the illusion on account of which I am not aware of this.”¹

Our first criticism of such a view is this: If I believe that the same absolute will lives in myself and in others, I cannot recognize a duty to sacrifice the mode of it in myself in favor of another mode. I need not sacrifice any form of will in myself to gratify any form of will in some one else. If I will to enjoy something and another wills to enjoy the same thing, and both cannot have it, I am not obligated to sacrifice my enjoyment of it that the other may enjoy it. You cannot prove anything in the other superior to what I possess in myself.

A second criticism says that if individuality is an illusion, one illusion need not sacrifice itself for another illusion. Why should I sacrifice any desire for you, since I know that you are an illusion? An illusion is not worthy of my love and sacrifice. If you say to me, “Your apparent *ego* is an illusion — the only reality is the Absolute,” I reply that other individuals are also illusions, and I will not sacrifice any enjoyment of my illusory self for any enjoyment of an illusory other. Egoism and altruism are matters of indifference.

Furthermore, the belief in a unity that conceals

¹ Schopenhauer, *op. cit.*, Bd. II, S. 690-691.

itself underneath the diversity of things can never be any more than a *belief*; such a unity can never be a demonstrated reality. And action founded upon such a belief can never be any more than speculation in act; it cannot be proved to be morally obligatory.

Finally, we should deny the legitimacy of the belief in the unity and identity of a will underlying all the expressions of will. The individual knows nothing about the identity of his will with all other wills in the universe, the "absolute will." He does not know that his apparent difference from others is an "illusion." How can the illusion itself be accounted for? The illusion is real. It is not an illusory illusion. When you say "the individual has no worth — only the Absolute has worth," how do you account for the apparent difference in interest which you feel called upon to deny to be a real difference? The assertion that the individual or any part of the individual's life is illusory and worthless seems such veritable folly that we are tempted to throw the whole metaphysical discussion overboard. I know individuals and I know their worth; I care for myself and I care for some other individuals. About the "Absolute" I neither know nor care anything at all.

Precisely the same sceptical and individualistic objections may be raised against Wundt's *Gesamtwille* as a foundation of obligation. Wundt calls upon us to subordinate ourselves, and to sacrifice ourselves, to the *Gesamtwille*, a will that includes our own as a part.¹ He speaks of a relative *Gesamtwille* and of an absolute *Gesamtwille*.

¹ Wundt, "Ethik," Bd. II, S. 159-164.

wille. He speaks of one *Gesamtwille* as being more limited than another. Wrong is when the more limited *Gesamtwille* is elevated above the more inclusive *Gesamtwille*. He says that this superior will, this inclusive will, is "an idea of reason," a *Vernunftidee*. The empirical will is finite and subject to error. Reason's idea caps the endless series of the forms of will with a highest or absolute will; and this highest or absolute will is to be, in the individual consciousness, the imperative moral ideal; in the state and society, it is to be the spirit of history; in the religious conception of the universe, it is to be the will of God. We should always let ourselves be led by the *Gesamtwille*. The subordination of our individual wills to the *Gesamtwille* is to be the ruling principle of our lives.

With this doctrine of Wundt's I cannot agree. I cannot conceive a *Gesamtwille* apart from or in addition to the individuals' wills. He says that the *Gesamtwille* determines what is right, and that the individuals' wills are all to be in subjection to the *Gesamtwille*. But I am acquainted only with individual wills, and not with the *Gesamtwille*. These individual wills differ among themselves. Must the right be determined then by a vote of the majority? Wundt would not agree. When he says that the *Gesamtwille* is an idea of reason, we can ask, "an idea of *whose* reason?" Ideas are ideas in individuals' reasons. Individuals' reasons and ideas differ, just as individuals' wills differ, and we always have relativity. Instead of trying to conceal the transcendental character of a *Gesamtwille* by saying that it is an idea of reason (pre-

sumably our individual reasons), he should have made it an idea of a *Gesamtvernunft*. But is it not presumptuous for an individual to speak in the name of the *Gesamtvernunft*?

So to this doctrine that would ground obligation in a *Gesamtville*, we must oppose a sceptical individualism, and deny that Wundt can get any farther than the individual reason and the individual will. "The idea of reason," "the collective will," "the universal will," "the absolute will," can never represent any more than a particular idea in a particular mind, and can claim authority over only a particular will.

Wundt says¹ that speculation is needed to *complete* experience. He speaks of the necessity of presuppositions about the essence of things, the conception of universally valid principles, the need of introducing hypothetical elements in our thought in order to satisfy the intellect's need of unity in conception — elements that do not rest upon experience, but precede and lay a foundation for it. In the opinion advocated in this treatise there is no other justifiable procedure than the one that begins, continues, and ends with the facts of experience. The facts of experience are the objects with which reason must operate. "Speculations," "conceptions," "postulates," "presuppositions," and the other idols of metaphysics are to be accounted untrustworthy. They are to be used only as provisional experiments in the search for facts. No credence is to be placed in them until they have been proved true in experience. The only force possible for them is that

¹ Wundt, "Ethik," Bd. I, S. 16-17.

of the greater probability. So long as a thing is regarded as merely possible, acts with reference to it cannot be claimed to be obligatory. You may show me that God and hell-fire are possible, and that it is possible that God will cast me into hell-fire if I tell a lie; but to make me see the obligation not to lie on that account, you must make the evidence stronger than mere possibility. If you fail to make me see a greater probability on that side than on the other, you fail to make me admit the obligation.

A fact of experience, which is at the same time a rational conclusion from any critique of the faculties of knowledge, is this: the relativity of human knowledge. With reference to the transcendental world, we do not know with certainty what it is, or even that it is. We cannot make it enter, then, as a determining element in the conduct of men, to make men love one another or sacrifice themselves for one another. We may entertain its idea as an article of personal faith, an object of our love, an inspirer of our conduct. But we cannot make it an instrument of social constraint or moral obligation.

When I stand before this dilemma, "Choose between the interests of self and the interests of others," and metaphysics offers its findings to my intellect as proof positive of a duty to choose in favor of the interests of others, I reply, Your findings are worthless as regards a convincing proof. They contain only suppositions, hypotheses, faiths. If I am to be guided by intellect, I see no convincing reason in anything that you have to offer me. Your metaphysical beliefs with reference to the

ultimate nature and destiny of man and the universe contain no certain ground of obligation. I can see no force at all in the demand that I choose in favor of the interests of others on the basis of a metaphysical thesis which dissolves the concrete individual personalities of myself and fellows in the vague and boundless conception of an all-embracing infinity. "Why cannot the investigator stick to the proper sphere of a truly empirical science and refuse to discuss or even consider the conceptions that are tainted with this metaphysical idea of an Absolute?"¹ It is precisely this that I wish to do. I wish to be quit of "the Absolute." Ethics does not need a metaphysical foundation. If duty cannot be grounded in the actual earthly constitution of the actual earthly inhabitants of this actual earthly world, then I simply deny that there is any duty at all. If you say to me that such and such a thing is my duty, and base it in the nature of the Ultimate Reality, the Absolute, the World-Ground, the Universal-All, or any such metaphysical conception of a being or existence that transcends actual human experience, I reply that I know and care nothing at all about such a being, and so do not regard what you say as my duty.

So far as concerns the determination of what ought to be done, and why, the supreme transcendence may remain an object of indifference to us. Concerning what transcends experience, what is beyond the limitations of space, time, and causation, what is beyond our knowledge, one has no more right to say that it is good than to say

¹ Ladd, "Philosophy of Conduct," p. 31.

that it is bad, nor to say that it is free than to say that it is not free, nor to say that it is the real than to say that it is the unreal, nor to say that it is the perfect than to say that it is the imperfect, nor to say that it is God than to say that it is Satan. In brief, it may be regarded as an object of indifference, so far as concerns our principles and conduct. Nothing but the facts of experience can afford any ground for real obligation. To ground morality, we must offer a scientific basis. It will not do to appeal to a mystery — such a procedure is an abdication of reason, or a treasonable surrender of science to ignorance.

Thus we oppose to any metaphysical dogmatism a *doubt* with reference to the things transcendental, and a *relativity of knowledge* with reference to the things immanent, and claim that in metaphysics a satisfactory ground of obligation cannot be found. It is in man's own nature and development that we must locate the explanation and justification of morality. We must refuse to draw upon the resources of an invisible, transcendental, metempirical world. A justifiable obligation for man must be grounded in the actual nature of man, in his actual constitution, in his actual goods and purposes, that is to say, in his actual human will. An ideal to be obligatory must represent to the individual a possible fullness of his life, the accomplishment of his will. "Absolute ideals" are of very questionable significance or importance, and are usually fancied by dreamers and for beings constituted differently from men and for purposes different from the purposes of actual human life. It is a flighty

fancy that expects to render obligatory the pursuit of some absolute good lying beyond the strictly human goods and purposes. The end of moral endeavor must be looked for in human wills, and must be accepted as it is given.

The metaphysician may try to convert an egoist into an altruist, but he can make absolutely no headway until the egoist has granted the fundamental assumption upon which the metaphysical system is built. If the egoist happens to entertain a different metaphysics, the metaphysician is wholly without an implement, and can accomplish nothing. For instance, suppose the metaphysical moralist believes in idealism, or bases his argument for altruism on the immortality of the soul, while the egoist is a materialist and believes in the annihilation of the individual at death; plainly the egoist will not be converted. Nothing can be accomplished by metaphysical procedure unless all the parties agree in their fundamental speculations.

Metaphysical speculations, like the religious faith in the intrinsic goodness of things and the universe, are hypotheses that are not verifiable in experience. With reference to the ultimate nature of reality, the essence of being, the final destiny of man and the universe, all we can say is that we do not know it. We may speculate about it, and imagine it to be this or that, but our opinion of it is a gratuitous postulate. When the duty of altruism, or preferring the good of others to our own, is made to rest upon a metaphysical foundation, it is given a basis that is wholly metempirical, hypothetical, uncertain. When it is claimed that

the basis of moral obligation rests in some proposition concerning the Absolute, the World-Ground, the Ultimate Reality, and man's relation thereto, or concerning the ultimate destiny of the individual and the race, it is thereby conceded that obligation is problematical and that action in accordance with it is a risk, "a speculation in act." It is an impossible task to try to draw a picture of the Ultimate Reality that will justify the individual in seeking the good of others at the expense of the good of self.

In introducing the idea of the Absolute, one is introducing an unknown and unknowable x . This makes of morality something entirely problematical, a leap in the dark. I may believe in this x , or I may not believe in it; and it cannot be shown that to believe is better than not to believe. The metaphysical moralists, in order to render morality firm and secure, would ground it upon something thoroughly shaky and insecure. We have objective certitude of our experiences; but of any kind of absolute, we have no certitude, — we have only an uneasy suspicion. Yet these moralists propose the Absolute as the secure foundation of morality. They would give us a hypothesis as a certainty, a supposition as a law, something problematical as absolutely commanded.

We may place a question mark after our worldly experience, and say, Perhaps this is not all — perhaps there is some further reality. But all the influence that this can have on our actions is to prevent us from fastening our interests upon the experience of this world as absolute and final. The idea of the possibility of a further and ulti-

mate reality may not be imposed as a categorical authority over our actions. It cannot make us act as if the world of experience were not all real, or act in any way contrary to what the experiences of this world dictate.

The good that metaphysics does consists in making us comprehend the limitation of our knowledge. The whole case of the relation of metaphysics to morality is made out in saying that since we do not know the ultimate nature of reality, it is unreasonable to act as if we did know it and were scientifically certain that the essential reality of existence — the absolute good — is *a*, *b*, or *c*. This knowledge of our ignorance is enough to put limitations upon a sensuous egoism, but it is also enough to put limitations upon a sentimental altruism.

Fouillée attempts to show how a modest claim can be made in the name of metaphysics. He maintains that metaphysics can put us under the obligation to abstain from harming our fellows. "We must not change *x* into *a*, *b*, or *c*. We must not say, 'The absolute foundation is force and matter, nothing else,' — that is, we must not be materialistic dogmatists; we must not say, 'The absolute is one substance of which the individuals are only modes without value,' — that is, we must not be pantheistic dogmatists; we must not say, 'The absolute is a personal god whose will I know and accomplish,' — that is, we must not be theological dogmatists. We must entertain a metaphysical doubt that does not pretend to resolve the unknown *x* of the ultimate nature of man and the universe into the pure matter of the

materialistic dogmatists, or into the unique and necessary substance of the pantheistic dogmatists, or into the absolute, transcendent, divine will of the theists. Such metaphysical doubt can teach us to abstain from injuring others, in as much as they do not injure us; to respect the will of others, and to expect a like respect in return. From the idea of our ignorance of the true nature of the universe, it logically follows that individual liberty should be limited so that liberty may become reciprocal and equal for all. We must limit our wills by the wills of others. We must not act toward others as if we knew fully and wholly the essence of them and us, and that all was subservient to our own individual pleasure. We must not make of ourselves the Absolute or God. We must respect the ideal possibility of something that transcends the present, the sensual, the material, the mechanical. We must not change x into 0.”¹

For the sake of argument let us grant this much to the advocates of metaphysical procedure, and concede, though only for a moment, that our knowledge of our ignorance is a fit foundation for justice, an abstaining from harming others or using them as mere means for our gratification. Still we must deny that a metaphysical doctrine can afford a foundation for the obligation of positive altruism. The obligation of justice we may admit to follow from the certitude of incertitude, bringing about concessions on the part of all, causing each to limit his liberty by the reciprocal liberty of others. But above the law of justice there is said to be a “higher law” which demands that I not only abstain from injuring others or

¹ Condensation from Fouillée, *op. cit.*, pp. 394–395.

benefiting myself at their expense, but that I also seek their interests instead of my own and even at the expense of my own. Now the pass from justice, the abstaining from injury, to altruism, the positive doing of good to others at the sacrifice of my own good, the positive preference of the happiness of others to my own, in the light of these metaphysical theories, remains still unaccomplished. The law to abstain or refrain may be deduced from our knowledge of our ignorance, but active and loving disinterestedness cannot be established by any procedure of metaphysical speculation, whether dogmatic or agnostic. In any metaphysical system, a disinterested act must ever be "a speculation in act," a risk, which one may take or not take, according as he wishes. He is under no obligation whatever with reference to it.

But it is wrong to concede that knowledge of ignorance is a sufficient ground even for "negative action." After all, "to abstain" is a form of acting. We should deny that a metaphysical doubt, or a knowledge of ignorance concerning ultimate realities, is sufficient to restrain us from harming others if they stand in the way and hinder us from attaining our wills. A doubt cannot, as such, ground an obligation to modify our conduct in any way whatever. Doubt, as such, can neither restrain nor impel. For the unknown to influence our acts, it must be represented, not merely as a possibility, but as a definite probability, in the light of experience. It must convince our wills that the greater probability of attaining satisfaction lies in the direction indicated.

CHAPTER IV

LAW AND OBLIGATION

IN answer to our question concerning the ground of obligation, it might be said that an act is right because it is commanded by the law, or because it agrees with the opinion of the majority of men as expressed in custom. The custom of society is to be regarded as the supreme rule of duty. No individual must have a private conscience. The child recognizes his parents and the older members of his family as his superiors, and never questions the rightness of their commands. When the circle of his acquaintance enlarges, he acknowledges the community to be the external authority whose judgments and decrees he should obey. When he arrives at the age of citizenship, he admits the laws and customs of his country to be the authority that determines his duty. He has derived his being from others; by others he has been protected, nurtured, educated. All that he has, he has received from society. All that he is, he is by virtue of his dependence. If isolated, he would cease to exist. To humanity he owes complete loyalty and obedience. In custom and law he recognizes the commandment of humanity. In these there is no arbitrariness, no tyranny, no partiality, no individual selfish interest. They express the general good of the whole. The indi-

vidual has not the right to draw any command into question. In doing this he would be guilty of insubordination, he would be setting himself up as superior. He must yield unquestioning obedience. He may sometimes be in perplexity as to what is demanded of him; but when he has found this out, it would be infamous for him to doubt that it is due from him.

We must see whether this position can be accepted as satisfactory. Society and humanity are treated as an entity over against the individual. But society is composed of individuals; and it is in the moral consciousness of these individuals that right is found, and not in society as a personified entity, nor in law and custom considered as expressing society's will. If a man inquires, What is "society"? we can only reply, It is *the other individuals*. The moral ideas which are expressed in the customs of a certain community are not necessarily shared by every one of its members. Customs represent the ideas of only a number, though perhaps the majority, of the individuals. But individual convictions form the basis of public opinion, and have equal claim upon consideration. Indeed, in many cases individual convictions are entitled to higher respect, since they represent a higher morality, a moral standard more purified by reflection. Certain high-minded individuals may arise to find fault with the moral ideas prevalent in society, and to endeavor to raise public opinion to higher moral levels.

Law and custom never cover the whole field of morality. They regulate external conduct

only. They deal with overt acts, or omissions, and care nothing for the mental side of conduct, unless law and custom be transgressed. They tolerate all kinds of volitions and opinions if not openly expressed. They do not condemn the antisocial mind, but the antisocial act. They demand that under certain circumstances certain actions shall be either performed or omitted, and, provided that this demand is fulfilled, they take no notice of the motive of the agent or ommitter. Further, they may enjoin acts which by themselves are indifferent or even blameworthy from a moral point of view. Thus their incongruity with morality readily appears.¹

Law and custom constitute an external authority for the individual; and, as such, their only force rests upon constraint. But constraint is incapable of founding moral obligation. The moral consciousness can be enlightened or persuaded, but it cannot be forced. If I am externally caused to perform an act, I am not responsible for it, nor can I regard myself as deserving either merit or demerit. If the action is not the result of the processes of my thinking and feeling, if it has not been willed by me, if it does not express myself, it has no moral significance for me. I cannot consider myself to have been obligated morally to the performance of such an act, nor can I hold myself responsible for it, nor can I experience the moral punishment of self-reproof for its badness. Moral punishment, the consciousness of internal personal demerit, is some-

¹ Cf. Westermarck, "Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas," Vol. I, pp. 160-168.

thing very different from the external infliction of pain by the law and public opinion. I may say of this latter, "It is not merited." There will be a physical aversion to the pain, but no acceptance of the pain as the fitting complement of internal moral demerit. I cannot be punished in the moral sense unless it is I who punish myself. It is only when there has been my intention of the act, an identification of the act with my own nature, that I can experience moral responsibility for it, and a consequent merit or demerit. Moral obligation cannot be imposed by external authority.

Conformity to society's laws and customs must not be erected into the inviolable standard of right, nor regarded as the essence of virtue. "Righteous" and "virtuous" are epithets which men apply to *conduct*; and *conduct* is something more than mere conformity to an external rule of behavior. Conduct is the action of a rational self. It is true that in early life we refer our acts to external authority, but this external authority is itself personal, and is representative of that which we ourselves will, or shall will when we arrive at moral manhood. This relation becomes clearer in later life. When we shape our acts with reference to law and custom, we regard these as representing our own wills, as representing what we should decide were we to take the trouble to investigate the matter in question. Law and custom have no other authority over us than this. We have found in the majority of cases that our own investigations and decisions have led to the same conclusions as those formulated in custom

and law. And so ordinarily we accept these as convenient and authoritative, but authoritative only because we have willed them to be authoritative. Their authority is not absolute, but is derived from our own moral judgments and decisions.

This relation has always subsisted. Law and custom have not made man's moral judgments, but man's moral judgments have made law and custom. To say that law and custom determine morality is just to reverse the true relation. "The legal, conventional, standard seen in public opinion and law is also *somebody's ethical ideal, or has been*; it could never have come to be the legally or conventionally right, if it had not first been somebody's ethically right. The growth of society is but the generalization of the individual's ethical ought into society's conventional ought. And then it proceeds by generalizing the further acquirements of the ethical ought in the individual; acquirements made only by conformity to the legal ought, and the transcending of it. For society to make a rule is to generalize the ethical opinion of individuals; for the individual to get an ethical rule is for him to particularize on the basis of society's conventional rules. . . . It is only as the individuals attain new intuitions and announce them that society can generalize them in turn in new institutions and in laws."¹

Law and custom have constantly undergone change to meet the new requirements set by the

¹ Baldwin, "Social and Ethical Interpretations," pp. 560-562.

more enlightened moral consciousness. The moral consciousness of individuals of the former generations has embodied itself in laws and customs. The moral consciousness of present-day individuals is constantly recognizing these laws and customs as imperfect, and is constantly changing them, endeavoring to give better and better expressions of the morally right. An enlightened individual consciousness conceives new ways of behavior that correspond better with the moral ideal; other individuals approve; custom and law are changed to meet these new conceptions. There has always been, and is still, the constant condemnation and rejection of some law or custom deemed to be imperfect, and the establishment of a new custom or law that corresponds better with the moral ideal. And every such revolution has its inception in the judgment of some individual.

Before law and custom can be recognized as obligatory for the individual, they must prove their rightness to his moral consciousness. The individual's own moral decisions determine the rightness of the commands of law and custom, and the justness of their punishments. His own moral consciousness is supreme, and cannot renounce its supremacy. The average individual seldom calls up law and custom for an overhauling; long undisputed sway may seem to have given them the supreme authority; but at any time the individual may assert his power, and may call them to account before the tribunal of his own consciousness. If a man obeys law and custom without question, he is no longer moral, but is a slave. He who suffers social conven-

tions and opinions to have absolute control over him is not a moral being. The morally free man understands the reasons of his behavior, and performs a given act, not because he is commanded to do it, but because it is reasonable. Law and custom become moral, and obedience to them becomes obligatory, only when they are affirmed by the individual's reason to be a rational mode of behavior.

“The ethical in the man represents the essential and highest outcome of his individual nature; this on one hand. The socially established represents the highest outcome of the collective activities of man; that on the other hand. What then can be done, in the case of conflict between these two? *Nothing!* Nothing can be done. It is the case of the fountain running higher than its source. The man cannot argue; morality is not a thing of logical sanction. And, moreover, to argue a violation of law — in serious cases — is to commit it, in the eyes of society. Yet society, on the other hand, cannot suppress such a man, although too often that is what results. For it is just through the ethical reformers that society learns her own mind and heart. It is the picture, which history shows, of the seer on his mountain. He speaks in riddles. He stands and waits. He weeps. To be sure, he may be no genuine great-man; he may be a fanatic, a lunatic, a fraud, — but, then, he may be a prophet, a seer, a teacher of nations! *This is the final and irreducible anti-nomy of society.* It shows at once the law of social growth, its direction, and its goal. It shows the dialectic of growth in its concrete social form,

as in the child's obedience we see it in its concrete private form. Society must simply listen to such a man, for her weal or woe, as the child listens to his father. The insight is on the seer's side. . . . If we bring this finally under the question of rules, we reach a last possibility: *that in the ethical realm the individual may rule himself by rules which are in advance of those which society prescribes, and also exact them.* This is common, not only with the moral seer, but in the life of us all."¹

The individual distinguishes among the customs and laws of society some that are bad and some that are good. He acknowledges an obligation to perform certain actions that have become established by society, but recognizes an equal obligation to avoid certain other actions which are equally well established. Now, as Huxley pointed out,² if man's sense of obligation were determined by social customs, then obligation would attach to all the established customs of society indiscriminately, and the individual would feel equally obligated to do the bad as well as the good which society indulges in. The fact, therefore, that this is not the case, goes to show that the individual's moral consciousness asserts itself as superior to established custom.

When the individual's reason asserts the wrongness of custom and law, he regards himself as warranted in transgressing them; and he may even prefer to die rather than be false to what he

¹ Baldwin, *op. cit.*, pp 566-567.

² Huxley, "Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays," 1905, p. 56.

conceives to be the real judge of right. He should have profound respect for the opinions and standards of other men; but in the end, his own standard is the one for him to follow. The individual must revolt from the demands of society, whenever society demands of him the rejection of his own ideal of life though it does not damage others. To his own ideal the individual must cling; else he would be false to his own nature. On occasion he may disregard and transgress any external standard of morality, no matter how generally accepted. There come crucial moments in the lives of some individuals when they are morally bound to act contrary to law and custom, contrary to everything that has heretofore been held to be right. The great moral reformers and prophets of humanity have always felt justified in their revolt against current social morality. Socrates came into conflict with the law and custom of his time. Jesus came into conflict with, and set himself above, custom and law. He recognized a higher right. He loosed himself and his disciples from the law of his people; he broke the Sabbath, he refused to fast, and taught his disciples to do likewise.

In the last resort, then, ideas of duty and feelings of obligation are determined for every individual by what takes place in his own consciousness. There is only one true interpreter of right and wrong for a man, and that one interpreter is his own reason. But human nature is similar, and certain ways of behavior come to be recognized as binding upon mankind generally. The judgments of individual moral consciousness be-

come objectively embodied in customs and laws, and these are at length accepted as having the right to regulate the individual's behavior. But this right must not be blindly assented to. The laws and customs must be approved and justified by the individual's reason if they are to be obligatory upon him. External laws must be acknowledged internally before they become moral laws. They must appear before the individual's consciousness as binding, exciting his feeling of obligation and offering a reason to his will. The obligatory character of an act rests solely upon its being the conviction of the individual's own consciousness. The right is defined for each as the decision of his own reason. Moral law and moral conduct forever remain the individual's own affair.

For our conduct to be moral it is not necessary that we act contrary to law and custom. We may never have to do this, at most only seldom. Morality consists in consciously guiding our own action instead of blindly following external commands whose reasonableness we do not understand. The emphasis that has been laid upon the individual character of the right must not be interpreted as giving warrant for the idea that we may shut our eyes and ears to investigation and instruction. That would be unreasonable. We know that we are men, and that our knowledge is imperfect and inadequate, and we should seek all the information and enlightenment possible. Very valuable sources are books and our intelligent fellows. Some gifted individuals have thought long and seriously respecting right and wrong conduct,

and in them the best moral consciousness of the race seems to have come to expression. From them we can learn much. Law and custom are the expression of what many generations of the race have found on the average to be best and right. They portray modes of conduct which the generations of men have found to be best adapted to the attainment of their aims. They represent the accumulated intelligence of the race, a composite of past wisdom. Hence, actions that follow their leading will usually have a tendency to work beneficially for the maintenance and increase of human life. In general, obedience to law and custom preserves human well-being, while transgression disturbs or destroys it. The individual must place great confidence in the judgments of society; for he cannot calculate with much certainty or assurance whether a certain action will result in beneficial or harmful consequences for human life. He who violates custom and law always runs a greater risk than he who keeps within their requirements. Nevertheless, it is not the strong characters that prize most highly peace and security, and "let the well enough alone." Those men through whom the greatest improvements for human welfare have come have been those who in one way or another have dared the ventures of unknown ways.

The point that has been emphasized here is that none of the external regulations, nor all of them, can excuse the individual from reflective thinking for himself. A moral person cannot take his principles of conduct in uncriticised form from prevalent customs, laws, and opinions, but must

ground them upon his own reason. The individual's own moral judgment is the supreme court of appeal to which he may resort when he doubts the justice or rightness of the laws and customs of society.

CHAPTER V

LOGIC AND OBLIGATION

ANOTHER attempt to solve the problem concerning egoism and altruism is that made by logic. Morality is said to be intellectual in character. The right is dependent upon the true. The obligatory is arrived at through the logical functioning of reason. An end may be declared moral only on the condition that it is capable of generalization and can enter into a general law of reason. Duty is an intellectual inclination. To the sense-inclinations of egoism and altruism there is added in man the imperative need of logical verity. Physiological needs are at the beginning of development in the animal nature; rational needs are at the end of development in man. Identity and equality are categories of thought, which become categories of action, and take the name of justice. Goods are classed according to their generality, that is, according to the number of persons partaking of them; and the more general good has precedence of the less general good.

By way of introduction to the classical attempts to arrive at the duty of altruism through dependence upon logical principles and processes, we consider first a moderate use of this procedure.

It is reasonable for me to take as the aim of

my conduct my own happiness. Upon reflection, however, I perceive that the happiness of another individual is not less worthy in itself of being sought than mine. Extending this to its logical end, I come to accept the maxim: "The general happiness should be sought." First, a self-evident proposition is stated; then by reflection and analysis it is decomposed into a more general proposition accompanied by a limiting restriction. Finally, concentrating our regards upon that limitation of the general principle, we see that it is arbitrary and not founded in reason; so we deny its validity, and substitute in place of it as the first principle of morality the larger proposition of which it affirmed only a part, and are thus "brought to accept Universal happiness or pleasure as that which is absolutely and without qualification Good or Desirable: as an end, therefore, to which the action of a reasonable agent as such ought to be directed."¹

Man is an intelligent and reasonable being; and the individual is capable of conceiving a general good, a good not only for himself but for all. He conceives the identity between himself and other men. He classes goods according to their generality. He feels the greater force of the more general proposition that the good of all is to be sought rather than the good of one. The universal proposition surpasses the particular proposition; therefore, the individual decides to seek the general good rather than his own. A sentiment and motive accompany every judgment. Being produced by the judgments, they have the same prop-

¹ See Sidgwick, "Methods of Ethics," 5th ed., pp. 382, 421.

erties as the judgments; and hence, the sentiment and motive produced by the universal judgment surpass the sentiment and motive produced by the particular judgment. Therefore, the virtuous or altruistic sentiments and motives surpass the selfish egoistic sentiments and motives.¹

“What is the motive that is capable of satisfying intelligence? The essential character of intelligence is to tend towards impersonality and universality. When I make use of my intelligence, I make abstraction of my ego and my personal sensibility; I no longer see any *objective* reasons why my happiness is preferable to that of others; I see only *subjective* reasons, reasons of pure sensibility, of which intelligence has precisely the task of making abstraction. So long as there remains before my reason a being deprived of happiness, my reason is not satisfied in its tendency to universality. In order that I may be truly happy as a rational being, it is necessary that all the other beings be happy.”²

Egoism is a natural and primitive instinct; altruism is a natural and primitive instinct. So long as we remain in the realm of instinct there is no choice between them. Reason or intelligence must be called upon. It is only by logical reflection that we may be caused to give to altruistic conduct the precedence of egoistic conduct. We must free our moral judgments from the influence of nearness or remoteness to our individual persons; otherwise, unavoidable contradictions arise in our moral concepts. The

¹ Adapted from Fouillée, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

² Fouillée, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

motive of this elimination of whether the matters concern our own interests or those of some one else is thus purely logical. The attempt to form our moral concepts so that they shall be free from contradictions has its chief influence, of course, upon our moral judgments. But through these it comes to exert an influence upon our moral feelings and to determine our actions, since we are led by an endeavor to have our feelings and actions in agreement with our moral judgments.¹

The principal influence in establishing the primacy of the general well-being over the individual well-being is exerted by the intellect, by logical reflection. It is in this realm that the struggle between the interests of self and the interests of others rages most freely and most intensely. The struggle in the realm of the natural instincts and impulses is quickly over. The conflict may be sharp, but the stronger instinct or impulse wins a quick victory. In the realm of the intellect, however, the *pros* and *cons* may be considered from various points of view and weighed again and again. Another advantage is the decisiveness of a conclusion. In the realm of instincts and impulses, the egoistic or altruistic interest that is defeated is not overcome, but soon returns to begin anew the struggle. In the realm of intellect, however, an overthrow of either party is more decisive, and may be final. Furthermore, in the realm of intellect, the compass of motives is much larger than in the realm of instinct and impulse. In the latter the reference is only to the immediate present and limited experiences;

¹ Adapted from Wundt, *op. cit.*, Bd. II, S. 12.

while in the former the reference is to the whole of life and all its varied experiences, and takes into consideration the whole organization of society. Thus in the realm of intellect the interests of the collectivity have greater force than in the realm of impulsive inclination. And it is by the force of logical considerations that we may hope to make men altruistic.¹

Let us now turn to the objections that may be raised to these attempts to lay the foundation of the obligation to be altruistic in the principles and processes of logic.

These attempts posit the equality of all persons and a possible substitution of persons. But must we admit the cogency of this procedure? Shall we not maintain that it is simply a logical fiction when one affirms abstractly the equality of all persons? I cannot admit this equality when it comes to a choice between my good and your good. For me there is a most important difference between persons. This logical attempt to ignore the content of personality is an attempt to do away with precisely the thing that makes me a person, my individual difference from others. You and I are not equal in all respects. There is always this supreme difference that you are you and I am I. Logic cannot identify us except abstractly and fictitiously. In reality, why should I sacrifice myself for you? How can it be demonstrated that your life and health are good for me in those cases where you and I are in conflict? Why should I even place you upon the same level with myself and regard our interests as equal?

¹ Adapted from Wundt, *op. cit.*, Bd. II, S. 131.

This is what it is necessary to explain if a logical foundation is to be given to obligation, altruism, sacrifice.

Furthermore, how does the logician arrive at the general proposition from which he starts? The law of generalization presupposes a good to be generalized. Something is good in general and universally solely because it is good for each of us in particular, because it is a condition of happiness for each one. From the fact that life and health are good for me, I infer that they are good also for you who resemble me. It is not from a general proposition that the individual draws his particular conclusion. For example, the individual does not have in mind the general proposition, "All men desire to live," when he says, "I desire to live." His particular proposition is given to him by the facts of his nature, his organic constitution. He needs not to know anything at all about whether other people desire to live or desire happiness. He knows his own experience, however, that he desires to live and to live happily. In like manner, the only way to arrive at the general proposition that all men have equal claims upon happiness would be to substantiate first individual claims upon happiness, and then to proceed from these particulars to the general.

We cannot say, "Individual equals individual"; at most we can only say, "Equality does not exist, but ought to exist; the ideal of equality ought to become a reality." But the reply to this is, Why? From a purely logical standpoint, why is "A equals B" preferable to "A is greater than B" or "A is less than B"? Need of establishing

equality, need of compensation, reparation, etc., — all these things are different from mathematics and logic, and imply an appeal to some extra standard. Logical processes alone are not sufficient. There must be some end or standard from which to start in proving a logical correspondence. For instance, before it can be shown that putting people to death is *logically* contrary to the supreme moral or social end, this end must be established. Reason must obtain a standard by which to measure, some end or good; for instance, my individual well-being, or the well-being of those I love, or the well-being of the nation, or of humanity. This end is not given by reason; it is given to reason. Something is reasonable because it agrees with the good. Something is good because it is willed. Reason must have some criterion by which to measure. One cannot merely say, "Measure by logical verity, equality, or identity." This prescription is incomplete. True, equal, and logically correct are pure relations, — abstractions which have existence only in and by the things between which they exist. So, to the proposal of "logical agreement," we ask, "agreement with what?" The standard is not given by logic; it is given by nature, human nature, the will. The standard of measure, the first principle from which reason starts, is given to it by the individual will.

The egoist's "reason" does not give him the law, "Seek the universal good," or "The universal good is the absolute good — seek that instead of your own good." The egoist knows the law of his nature as "Seek your good." To say that "the reason has a character of universality about it"

cannot lead the egoist to the conclusion that he should seek another's good at the cost of his own. He may say that the law which he finds in his nature, "Seek your good," has universality for him. To him that is a universal law. The absolutist logician's conception of "the universal character" of reason seems to the egoist indefinite, hazy, incomprehensible. The egoist denies a duty of seeking "the universal good." He has no conviction of the existence of "a universal good," and he has no natural inclination to seek it. By the organization of his nature he is constrained to seek his own good. And his "nature" is fundamental. If it does not sanction the search, it is impossible that he seek "the universal good."

The absolutist logician bases his argument against the egoist on the ground of the universality of reason's laws. The egoist replies, The reasonable denotes a correspondence with the standard that has been given to reason. The standard that I have accepted is my own well-being. Whatever course of action agrees with that criterion and furthers its attainment is for me reasonable. You accept another criterion — "the absolute well-being," "the universal good" — as the ideal; and to you another course of action appears reasonable. But you cannot prove to me by reason that your standard is better for me than the one I have chosen. This standard is determined by my nature. The difference between you and me is this: our reasons measure things by different rules; and I prefer mine to yours. This preference is not derived from intellect, but from

natural organization. The fundamental difference is this: your nature is different from mine. The discreet egoist does not declare that individual pleasure is the "final and absolute good." He needs not say, and must not say, "It is reasonable for me to seek my individual good, *and* it is reasonable for all others to seek their individual good." He does not know what standard the others have. The law for any one else he does not know. He contents himself with declaring what he finds in his own nature. He does not know of "a universal law commanding the search for individual personal good" any more than he knows of a universal law commanding the search for the universal good. He does not assert a universal law, even a universal egoism. Of a "universal" he can have only doubt or ignorance. For him there is no other universal than this one universal, that there is no other universal.

It is impossible to show me logically that the happiness enjoyed by you is equal to the happiness enjoyed by me, and that I might just as well seek your happiness as to seek my own. You cannot prove to me that the happiness experienced by any number of others is superior to the happiness experienced by me, and that I ought to sacrifice my happiness in order that they might experience happiness. It is impossible to make me see why I should seek a less quantity of good for myself in order that others might have more of it. The egoist who confines himself strictly to the assertion that it is good for him to seek his own special well-being as the ultimate end is not convertible by logical processes to the view that he ought to

sacrifice any part of his good in order that others might have greater good.

It is logical sleight of hand when self-interest is made to pass over into others' interest. The logicians are fond of confusing "the general desire of happiness" with "the desire of the general happiness." In the first case the individual desire for individual happiness is spread over the collectivity; but in the second case the desire is not an individual desire for individual happiness, but is an individual desire for the general happiness, which is quite a different matter. It may be true that each individual desires his happiness, and that all the individuals desire their happiness, but from this "general desire of happiness" it is impossible to conclude an individual desire for the general happiness.

The logician cannot prove to the egoist that the distinction between *mine* and *thine* does not matter. For the egoist everything lies in just that distinction. The egoist says, My happiness consists in a personal and individual enjoyment of the happiness and not in another's enjoying it in my place. Happiness exists only for him who enjoys it. I would not dispute the propositions, "The happiness of another is a good for that other who enjoys it," and "The general happiness is a good for those who enjoy it," but from these it is impossible to arrive at the conclusion that the happiness of another is a good even for me when I have no part in its enjoyment, or that I should regard the happiness of others as superior to my own and should subordinate the aim at my own to the aim at theirs.

It is an altogether illusory abstraction, an altogether false major premise, from which a logical identification of my interests and your interests is drawn. If in my nature I do not identify your interests with mine, it is impossible for you to prove to me the obligation to identify them. Here are two propositions: "My happiness is a reasonable aim for me," "Your happiness is a reasonable aim for you." Now how can these two be combined and then taken apart to read, "My happiness is a reasonable aim for you," and "Your happiness is a reasonable aim for me"? Only by taking for granted (that is, without proof) that your happiness and my happiness do not conflict, and that I can experience your happiness. But if I say that I do not, and cannot, experience your happiness, and that I do not, and cannot, conceive your happiness and my happiness as identical, how can you prove to me that they are identical, or that I ought to prefer your happiness to mine? When Sidgwick says¹ that the good of any one individual is of no more importance, as a part of universal good, than the good of any other, he treats the universal happiness as an algebraic sum, composed of homogeneous and equal parts. But this sentence, in its phrase "as a part of universal good," assumes the very thing that is in question. As an egoist, I deny that my good is a *part* of universal good. For me, it is the *whole* of universal good; and the good of others may or may not be a part of my good.

G. E. Moore thinks that he has a definitive *reductio ad absurdum* of egoism, and is fond of

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 382.

repeating it. Really, however, it is but another instance of the classical stupidity of attributing objectivity to moral conceptions and judgments. In the following quotation, notice his dependence on the objective existence of "the ultimate rational end," "the good in itself," "the Universal Good."

"When I talk of a thing as 'my own good' all that I can mean is that something which will be exclusively mine, as my own pleasure is mine (whatever be the various senses of this relation denoted by 'possession'), is also *good absolutely*; or rather that my possession of it is *good absolutely*. The *good* of it can in no possible sense be 'private' or belong to me; any more than a thing can *exist* privately or *for* one person only. The only reason I can have for aiming at 'my own good,' is that it is *good absolutely* that what I so call should belong to me — *good absolutely* that I should *have* something, which, if I have it, others cannot have. But if it is *good absolutely* that I should have it, then every one else has as much reason for aiming at *my* having it, as I have myself. If, therefore, it is true of *any* single man's 'interest' or 'happiness' that it ought to be his sole ultimate end, this can only mean that *that* man's 'interest' or 'happiness' is *the sole good, the Universal Good*, and the only thing that anybody ought to aim at. What Egoism holds, therefore, is that *each* man's happiness is the sole good — that a number of different things are *each* of them the only good thing there is — an absolute contradiction! No more complete and thorough refutation of any theory could be desired. . . . Is there any sense in which a thing can be an ultimate rational end for one person and not for another? By 'ultimate' must be meant at least that the end is good-in-itself — good

in our undefinable sense; and by 'rational,' at least, that it is truly good. That a thing should be an ultimate rational end means, then, that it is truly good in itself; and that it is truly good in itself means that it is a part of Universal Good. Can we assign any meaning to that qualification 'for himself,' which will make it cease to be a part of Universal Good? The thing is impossible: for the Egoist's happiness must *either* be good in itself, and so a part of Universal Good, *or else* it cannot be good in itself at all: there is no escaping this dilemma. And if it is not good at all, what reason can he have for aiming at it? how can it be a rational end for him? That qualification 'for himself' has no meaning unless it implies '*not* for others'; and if it implies 'not for others,' then it cannot be a rational end for him, since it cannot be truly good in itself: the phrase 'an ultimate rational end for himself' is a contradiction in terms. . . . By no possible meaning, then, that can be given to the phrase that his own happiness is the ultimate rational end for himself can the Egoist escape the implication that his own happiness is absolutely good; and by saying that it is *the* ultimate rational end, he must mean that it is the only good thing — the whole of Universal Good; and, if he further maintains that each man's happiness is the ultimate rational end for *him*, we have the fundamental contradiction of Egoism — that an immense number of different things are, *each* of them, *the sole good*. — And it is easy to see that the same considerations apply to the phrase that 'the difference between his own happiness and another's is *for him* all-important.' . . . Either his own happiness is a good thing or it is not; and, in whatever sense it may be all-important for him, it must be true that, if it is not good, he is not justified in pursuing it, and that, if it is good, every one else has an equal reason to pursue it, so far as they are able and so far as it does not exclude their attainment

of other more valuable parts of Universal Good. In short it is plain that the addition of 'for him' 'for me' to such words as 'ultimate rational end,' 'good,' 'important' can introduce nothing but confusion."¹

The whole of Moore's criticism of the position that egoism is rational, and that "it cannot be proved that the difference between the egoist's own happiness and another's happiness is not *for him* all-important," is characterized by ignorance or forgetfulness of the subjectivity of all moral conceptions and judgments. Moore's arguments rest on the presupposition that "the good" is not subjective, but has an independent objective existence. Each of his statements should be completed by the addition of a clause to show its real basis, in the following manner: "The phrase 'an ultimate rational end for him' is a contradiction in terms" — *because* it contradicts my presupposition that "the ultimate rational end," "the truly good," is not subjective but objective. "The only reason I can have for aiming at 'my own good,' is that it is *good absolutely* that what I so call should belong to me. But if it is *good absolutely* that I should have it, then every one else has as much reason for aiming at *my* having it, as I have myself" — *on the basis of* my presupposition that what is absolutely good is objective and one, an objective unity in which the good of all is identical, and no part of which can be any one's *private* possession. "The addition of 'for him' 'for me' to such words as 'ultimate rational end,' 'good,' 'important' can introduce nothing but

¹ G. E. Moore, "Principia Ethica," pp. 99-101.

confusion" — *because* it is in confusion with my presupposition that the good, the important, and the ultimate rational end are not subjective to the individual but have an independent objective existence. "The egoist's happiness must either be good in itself, and so a part of Universal Good, or else it cannot be good in itself at all: there is no escaping this dilemma." The egoist says that his happiness is not "a part of universal good," but is the whole of universal good *for him*. Moore chafes at the qualification "for him." He says, "What egoism holds, therefore, is that *each* man's happiness is the sole good" — he suppresses the egoist's qualification "for him," and leaves the reader to infer "for all," which is, of course, an unwarranted distortion of the egoist's position. If Moore does not wish the reader to supply the qualification "for all," then he regards the question, "Good *for whom?*" as incompatible with the "absolute-ness" of the good, which shows again his dependence on the presupposition that the good is not subjective but has an independent objective existence. The egoist disputes Moore's assertion that he aims at his good because it is "absolutely good." By "absolutely good" it is plain that Moore means "good unconditionally or independently of the subject's nature and will." The very opposite of Moore's assertion is true. The egoist aims at his good *because it is not* "*absolutely good*," the "*good in itself*"; he aims at it because it is conditionally good, that is, good *for him*.

It is a very common procedure of the logician-moralist to try to capture the egoist in the following manner: You desire to live in society;

logically, you ought to desire the means to this end; now, fidelity in contracts is a means; therefore, you ought to be faithful in keeping your contracts; whoever violates a contract is in contradiction with himself — at the same time he both desires and does not desire to live in society; to break a contract is to act illogically, and is absurd and wrong. With like procedure all the other duties are deduced. But the egoist cannot be captured in this way. He replies: The contradiction is only apparent. My own interest being the law, I make a contract only in view of my greater interest. The day when keeping the contract is not to my interest, I break it. It is wrong to say that I desire that contracts be *universally* kept; or that I desire that *all* men act alike. I desire that in my own case I may at any time be an exception. As an egoist, society is not an end for me; it is a means to my greater self-interest. "I desire to live in society" does not mean that I desire to live for society; it means that I desire society to live for me. To my own interest everything else is secondary and subservient.

Sometimes the logician bases the obligation to be altruistic in "the organic whole of society." He says that "one man is no man." He exercises his privilege of definition, and defines a "person" as "a set of relations" or as "a part of a whole," and then goes on to deduce the profound truth, "Isolate this person, and he no longer exists." There are two objections to be raised against such an attempt at grounding obligation: First, the subject "person" has been wrongly defined in this play with logical definitions, propositions, and

conclusions. Man is not a logical definition or abstraction, and his life is not measured by the rules of the syllogism. "A part is a part of a whole; isolate the part, and it no longer exists," may be very true as logic; but it is not a description of man. The existence of a human being is not exhausted in his relations. He exists also in and for himself. Isolated, he would still exist. He would still be "a personal self," — not so large a self as if he existed in society, but nevertheless a true self, a self of large capacities, and under "moral obligation," the obligation to live as large a life as possible. A second objection is this: even if we granted that the human person is "essentially in the midst of relations with his fellows," we could maintain that the relations are antagonistic. We are not forced to admit, on the grounds of logic, that the relations are harmonious and beneficial to all. We may hold that men are at perpetual war with one another for interests that are mutually exclusive, and that human life is a part of "the universal struggle for existence." The *logic* of the matter of relationship does not lead us to altruism.

Sometimes the logician-moralist attempts to arrive at altruism through disclosing what is involved in the concept of duty. But validity cannot be ascribed to an imperative that can show no more for itself than that it has been developed out of definitions in a consistent, logical manner. A valid imperative must be grounded upon experience and must express a relation of fact to fact. We demand that an imperative offer as its credentials, not a logical consequence with presupposed defini-

tions, but a consequence with experienced facts. It must be laid before us, not as a necessary deduction from the "concept of duty," but as demonstrable through the experiences of life; for example, that this manner of acting has such and such effects upon the life of the agent and upon his surroundings; or in another form, that in order to accomplish such and such a thing that is willed, a certain course of action is shown by experience to be necessary. And this "necessity" must be, not a "necessity of thought," but a necessity made out in experience. Just as experience shows that exercise, cleanliness, and wholesome air are indispensable for the maintenance of physical health, just so experience shows that chastity, honesty, and truthfulness are indispensable for the maintenance of moral health.

A propos of "moral concepts," what is a lie? Is it an illogical relation of terms in a sentence? And is it wrong because this sentence cannot be put in universal form without being self-contradictory? Is such a lie "real flesh and blood," or is it only a "ghost"? Are human duties to be determined by the relations of concepts to one another in some logician's sacred scheme, instead of by their relations to human well-being, by their consequences upon men's lives? Shall we give up our dependence upon experience; shall we renounce scientific observation and experiment; and shall we betake ourselves to juggling with words, definitions, deductions, and the like? From such logomachy and legerdemain can we discover whether we ought to have free trade or protection; whether we ought to restrict immigra-

tion; whether we ought to have capitalism or socialism? From the concept of law can we tell whether senators ought to be elected directly by the people? From the concept of marriage can we tell whether divorce ought to be made easier? From the concept of state can we tell whether we ought to have a more expansive currency, or whether we ought to have a republic or a monarchy? And whose concept shall we take? Yours, mine, Hobbes's, Rousseau's, or Hegel's? Deductions from "concepts" must not be urged upon us as unconditionally obligatory. A "concept" is by no means something primary, but is wholly dependent upon experience. No one knows what is right or wrong except by reference to will and experience. Only experience can tell what is advantageous to, or destructive of, physical life; and only experience can tell what is advantageous to, or destructive of, moral life. And right, duty, and obligation are not without relation to life, but are wholly comprehended in it. Right can never be destructive of, or antagonistic to, human life, but is an expression of what advances or conserves it.

Another attempt depending upon logic holds that the possibility of universalization of the maxim without self-contradiction is the test of the rightness of actions. Kant represented the moral law as containing no material good, but as being purely formal, and as possessing a character of universality which permitted a distinction and test between what conforms to the law and what does not conform to it. The moral quality of an act is proved only when the maxim of the

act may be universalized.¹ What commands imperatively is pure reason, and *universal* pure reason, that is, reason emptied of all empirical content. Kant said that if the maxim of the action is not such that it may take on the form of a universal law of nature, it is impossible as a moral principle. He held that the moral worth of actions is absolutely independent of their consequences, and is determined exclusively by the disposition or intention. "There is nothing in the world or out of it that is good without any limitation except a good will."² A good will is a will that is determined, not by what it causes or accomplishes, not by its usefulness for the attainment of any object, but merely and only by reverence for the moral law. What is the moral law? It is known *a priori* as an absolute unconditional dictate of pure reason, and commands us so to act that the maxim of the action may be suitable for a universal law. The test of wrongness is that the principle of the action may not be stated in universal form without contradicting itself. Kant gives several examples of its application.³ Borrowing under promise of repayment, with knowledge and intention of failure to repay, is wrong, because if this principle be universalized one will see "that it can never hold good as a universal natural law and be consistent with itself, but must necessarily contradict itself. For the universality of a law that any one, when he is in need, may promise whatever he wishes with the

¹ Kant, "Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten," Werke, Bd. IV, S. 421-424.

² *Ibid.*, S. 393.

³ *Ibid.*, S. 421-423.

intention of not keeping it would make promising itself impossible, since no one would believe what was promised him, but would laugh at any such expression as an idle suggestion." Likewise, lying is wrong, because if universalized, it would contradict itself, since no one would longer believe, and with belief lying would cease. So with theft: this principle universalized would make property impossible, and so would make theft itself impossible. Injustice may not be conceived as a universal law of nature without contradiction. To wish to be a member of associated society and yet to wish to be unjust is to contradict one's self; for if one erects injustice into a law, society is dissolved at the same time and may no longer exist. Thus logical compatibility or consistency in the form of the maxim is the test of the morality of the act. The test is a purely logical consideration of form, and has no reference to content. "Be moral" is translated into "Be logical." The final test of the rightness of an act is whether its principle may be universalized without self-contradiction. This has no need of further justification, but is unconditional and ultimate. The object of the universalization of the maxim is not to secure the certainty or increase of any objective good, but is solely in and for itself. Human welfare does not enter into consideration. This doctrine is very far removed from those that test the rightness or wrongness of an act by its effects upon the maintenance and development of human life. The value of the universal form is absolute. Morality consists in willing universally, that is, in being rid of any

reference to particular contents, empirical matters, or the "goods" of experience.

Against this doctrine three objections may be urged:¹ (1) the test of universalization has a negative character, and may not furnish any positive law of action; (2) it is impossible of application, either general or particular; and (3) the moral value of a universal form is neither good nor bad.

(1) The universal form, apart from all content, is negative, and cannot lead to any positive action. It can have only a veto power, permitting or prohibiting. All that is positive in our actions comes from sensibility and particular wills. Pure reason, with its principle of universality, can only judge whether the acts accord with this principle or not. It has no resources, no fertility. It can never originate; it can never initiate action.

(2) The test of universalization cannot be applied in general cases. Kant himself admits that willing the universal may probably never take place. When we think that we are acting disinterestedly and in view of the universal, it is possible that some secret individual interest impels us. We are never sure of willing universally.

It is likewise impossible to apply this test in particular cases. We cannot determine with any certitude what the universal form demands with reference to particular actions; we cannot determine what is materially demanded by this formal law. "We ought to act without influence, regulation, or dependence upon the material" — but it is impossible for us to act without being

¹ Cf. Fouillée, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-215.

influenced, regulated, and guided by the matter of experience.

It is commonly argued against the Utilitarians that from the standpoint of practicability their criterion is faulty, since in practice no one can calculate exactly what the remote consequences of a specific act will be, and whether the act will result in more good than harm. It may also be argued against the Kantians that from the standpoint of practicability their criterion is likewise faulty, since in practice no one can tell whether the maxim of a specific act might be universalized without self-contradiction. Kant himself admits that so many things enter into the maxim that it is doubtful whether there ever was a perfectly good act. What is my maxim in giving money to this beggar? To relieve his destitution (in spite of the warning from the Associated Charities that I may be encouraging idleness and mendicancy); to still that disquieting sense of social responsibility that I feel; to inculcate lessons of sympathy in the children who accompany me; to win respect from bystanders; to gain credit on the books of Heaven? Perhaps a dozen elements, more or less conscious, enter into the maxim. The maxim of every act is complex. How can I universalize the maxim to see whether it is self-contradictory? How can I discover whether the particular maxim of my will, in a given instance, is such as to "hold good as a principle of universal legislation"?

(3) The moral value of a universal form is neither good nor bad. One might suppose a universal law of nature that would be an evil; for

example, universal suffering or universal selfishness. Again, one might suppose that the "in-itself-good" is individuality and not universality, that the only real and true good is individuality affirming itself. We do not know whether willing the universal, in as much as pure form, is willing a real good, a real evil, or a real indifferent. In the dark realm of "the universal," the *noumena*, the transcendent, "all cats look gray." We have no more ground to say that cruelty universalized would contradict itself than to say that tenderness universalized would contradict itself, or to say that lying universalized would contradict itself than to say that truthfulness universalized would contradict itself, or to say that theft universalized would contradict itself than to say that honesty universalized would contradict itself. No preference may be given to either of these alternatives. The one is as true as the other. If I act with an egoistic maxim, a Kantian could point out to me that if universalized, this maxim would contradict itself. If he acts with an altruistic maxim, I could point out to him that if universalized, that maxim would contradict itself.

Many of the moral laws commonly accepted by the Kantians as well as by most other moralists may not be universalized without contradiction. Hegel says¹ that if all the world lied, it is true that lying would no longer serve any purpose, and as a means would frustrate the accomplishment of its own end. But on the other hand, if all people gave their goods to the poor, what would become of charity? For almsgiving, as for

¹ Cf. Hegel, "Philosophie des Rechts," § 135.

lying, universalization means contradiction. So, contradiction in case of universalization does not prove by itself the immorality of the maxim or of the endeavor to accomplish its universal realization.

Furthermore, it is not only true that the maxims of some right acts are incapable of being universalized without contradiction, but also that the maxims of some wrong acts are capable of being universalized without contradiction. "Suppose I say that since suffering is foreign to moral evil and moral good, I may suffer, cause myself to suffer, cause others to suffer, and admit that they may cause me to suffer; and finally extend to all reasonable and free wills this maxim: *it is morally indifferent to suffer, to undergo, or to cause suffering*. Could not this maxim become a universal law without self-contradiction? Without doubt the actual results might be displeasing for our sensibility and for our desires; but can it be shown by the test of universalization without contradiction that such a maxim would be immoral?"¹ "All manner of wrong and immoral acts may be justified by such a method."²

In fact, if we were Kantians, we might carry our principle to the extreme and say that granted certain conditions, perhaps maxims of only wrong acts are capable of universalization without contradiction. The conditions necessary may be those of hell. In hell may not bad principles alone be universalized? A good principle or maxim would be incongruous, and could not become universalized without destroying itself, for it would thereby destroy both hell and itself.

¹ Fouillée, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-221.

² Hegel, *op. cit.*, § 135.

This shows us what Kant took for granted; namely, that this is a perfect world or the opposite of hell. Thus alone could he teach that only the right is capable of universalization without contradiction.

To universalize the maxim of an action and end in an inconsequence or contradiction in the logical order, does not prove that the action itself may not be possible of universalization in experience. On the other hand, it is one thing to show that an idea may be universalized without self-contradiction and thus become a possible conception for us; it is another thing to show that the objects of the idea may really have other existence than in our ideas or conceptions. For instance, after it is proved that altruism is possible in conception without contradiction, it is not yet proved that altruism is possible in the actual conditions of earthly human existence. It is not enough to show that altruism is not in contradiction with the laws of thought; it must be shown that it is not in contradiction with the actual conditions of human life.

If a moral law be considered in its universal and pure form, apart from its material content, apart from its relation to sense-experience, apart from the human "goods" which it promotes and serves as a means, we have no more ground for saying of it that it is good, the "good-in-itself," than we have for saying that it is bad, the "bad-in-itself," and that in following it we are "dropping the meat for its shadow in the water," giving up the goods of experiential reality for a form that is only an illusion.

For any one who admits only the goods of experience as a standard, it does not seem absurd to inquire why a logical universal should be identified with the moral good. Wherein is a universal by itself good? Kant has not shown why the universal is better than, or preferable to, the particular, nor even that it is better or preferable. Everything depends upon what it is that is universalized. If pain, unhappiness, or sorrow be universalized, its universalization does not change it into a good. Would a universal bondage or servitude be liberty; a universal necessity, freedom; a universal evil, good? Certain metaphysicians may say so, but this only goes to show us the logomachy that they play. If a universal evil becomes a universal good, it is only because the universalization makes a zero out of each, and zero equals zero.

Thus a very grave objection to Kant's test of universalization without contradiction is that it is entirely empty, and no provision is made for its filling. According to Kant, if it be filled with material content, it loses value as a principle and guide of moral action; according to the position of this treatise, so long as it remains empty it remains without value or significance for human life. The moral value of a pure universal form is neither good nor bad.

When it is said that "the universal judgment surpasses in grandeur the particular judgment, and therefore the altruistic motive and sentiment surpass in grandeur the interested sentiment and motive," the grandeur that is said to attach to disinterestedness is not logical; it is really a

will-value. A man may sacrifice himself for an idea, but not for an idea purely logical, like the extension or comprehension of the terms in a judgment or proposition. The logic of the matter does not explain the sense of dignity and worth, the sense of duty or obligation, that leads to the sacrifice. The idea must be reduced to its elements; and the elements that underlie the idea and account for the sacrifice rest ultimately upon the will, the individual will.

We cannot be convinced that the motive of logical extension or universality, and the motive of contradictionless formation of our moral conceptions and judgments, are strong enough to restrain man from egoism and to spur him on to altruism. Altruism is not determined by logical considerations. The essential nature, the will, is more primary and fundamental than the intellect. Conversion from egoism to altruism cannot be brought about by means of logic. The search for a sufficient ground of the obligation to be altruistic must be carried still farther.

CHAPTER VI

PSYCHOLOGY AND OBLIGATION

PSYCHOLOGY is the basis of various important attempts to convert egoism into altruism. The chief and oldest attempt proceeds as follows: We first observe and discover how altruism is sometimes produced from egoism in the ways of nature, and then we apply this knowledge of the process to produce altruism at pleasure or in artificial ways. Egoism is primary in the individual, but through processes of association in the mind altruism comes gradually to rank with egoism, and the end may see a complete victory of altruism over egoism. The first basis of the general interests is found in their agreement with the interests of the individual. The official who serves the interests of the state fulfils his duty at first because in so doing he finds his own advantage; the manufacturer who applies and develops some useful invention for the promotion of the general well-being does so at first because he has his own personal interests in mind. But gradually the two interests become identified in idea, and finally the larger interests obtain the mastery. Even in industrial life, where egoistic interests are strongest, other besides egoistic motives gradually come into play. Alongside of the

egoistic sentiments there develop sentiments of what is decorous in society, what is shameful, what is customary, what is noble, etc.

Instead of the sentiment of obligation being accounted for by the external mechanism of economic laws and social sanctions, it is accounted for by the internal mechanism of ideas. In place of an obligation proceeding from physical necessity, there is substituted an obligation proceeding from psychological necessity. Self-regarding interests and other-regarding interests associate themselves in the mind necessarily, and this intellectual association necessitates a practical association of them. The association of the two interests in idea leads to their association in action. Thus a permanent relation of the two becomes established.

The association of ideas accounts for the sentiment of obligation. "When I would sacrifice your interests for mine, I find myself in the presence of a sort of intellectual barrier or impossibility, as when I would say that two and two make five. Just as the idea of two and two has become associated with the idea of four, so the association of ideas accounts for conscience. The perfect conscience would be that in which the association had become so strong that one could not only not break it, but could not even think of breaking it." ¹

The problem is: How to lead a man to disinterestedness? Now if we observe nature at work, we discover that a transition from egoism to altruism often comes about through the natural association of ideas which unites the two interests in

¹ Cf. Guyau, "La morale anglaise contemporaine," p. 293.

the intellect. So, we who would promote altruism in the world may take advantage of this psychological knowledge, and bring about an artificial association of the two interests. The sentiment of obligation may be made to arise through education. Education is capable of anything and everything. It is the fundamental and the essential. The mind is indifferent at the start. Anything may be sown there. Anything may be grown. The educator has absolute power. The educated is only what he is made to be. He is fashioned as the educator wills. The moral faculty is capable of being developed in any direction. Anything, no matter how absurd, may be made to have the whole authority of conscience.

So, what the psychological solution proposes is this: Take a child, let his parents and his nurses begin early to implant and interweave ideas and sentiments of altruism. As he grows older, let his playmates strengthen these ideas and sentiments. At college let him receive moral instruction along the same line. Let the customs and accepted practices of his business experience, and the training and exercises in civic functions be of the same character. At the end you will have a perfectly altruistic man. Through the associations made up of fears, sympathies, memories of infancy and childhood, self-esteem, social respect and responsibility, friendship, love, and of a myriad other ideas and emotions, he is rendered completely incapable of preferring the interests of self to the interests of others. Thus, the association of ideas may be made to serve as a sure foundation for moral obligation.

Let us now consider the objections to this type of the psychological solutions. In the first place, is it not a misrepresentation of the true nature of education? Is not the function of education to draw out from the mind a possibility, a latent power, that is already there? The faculties that are educated are not newly implanted by the educator. The tendencies are in man, and need merely favorable conditions for development. The educated is not wholly a product, a creation, of the educator. To accomplish this, it would be necessary to be able to carry out to the letter Holmes's partly humorous remark that a child's education should begin about two hundred years before his birth. No; the product is not wholly due to education. No nurseryman tries to grow pears from pumpkin seeds; no stock-breeder tries to train the foal of draft-horses into a winner on the race-track; no sane statesman expects to develop Caucasian characteristics in the offspring of African parents. The educator can merely provide the most favorable conditions for the development of the capacity which he finds already native in the person to be educated. When there is no native tendency to altruism, altruism cannot be produced by education.

Further, suppose that the educator could take the patient and from his infancy train him, habituate him, to feel and to act in an altruistic manner, as the result of blind routine or the mechanism of habitude. This training supplants or fills the place of self-consciousness and rational will. The individual is made an unconscious machine serving the general well-being. He is an automa-

ton, a passive instrument. This education is accomplished at the sacrifice of intelligence and reason. By these means, then, the individual is educated into an instrument of the general well-being. We have sympathy that is passive, charity that is machine-made, benevolence that is automatic, virtue that is habitude, altruism that is an unconscious necessity or fatalism. But is not this the effacing of individuality and liberty and the debasing of personality, in order to develop automatism? A man can be said to be altruistic only when he consciously and intentionally makes the good of others his aim. The true altruism is when the good of others is sought voluntarily for its own sake.

In the third place, this "obligation" acts only on condition that its real nature remain unknown. The only way in which this automatic morality can maintain its power is that the individual be unconscious of it as such. For this artificial association of the egoistic interests and the altruistic interests, produced by education, to remain secure, the individual must remain a simple machine governed by habitude and devoid of will and reason. We need not speak at length of the difficulty of making of reasonable man such a machine devoid of reason and will. Man is not thus pliable. But we emphasize the fact that the moment the individual becomes conscious of the artificiality of this association of interests in idea, its power over his actions is destroyed. An association that does not correspond entirely with reality, an association that has no foundation in existing facts, loses all its

authority when the person discovers its true nature. What is found to be not objectively rational, but only a purely psychical fabrication, no longer obligates. Thus it is in vain that one should seize men from infancy and attempt to produce altruism in them by artifice. An association of ideas, either natural or artificial, the work of cerebral inheritance from ancestors or the work of education, cannot suffice to bind a conscious reasonable being. Reason demands grounds for the obligatory character of the associational idea; and if no grounds can be given, obligation is denied. It is absurd to suppose that an idea, or an association of ideas, which is illusory and wholly subjective, and which I recognize as such, will nevertheless lead me to real and objective action to correspond to it. The practical efficacy of an idea or an association of ideas increases or decreases in proportion to my belief or disbelief in the reality of its object. There is a choice between two things: either the identity of the two interests exists in facts, and the association is but a rational reproduction of the facts, or else the identity of the two interests does not exist in facts, and then to believe in it is to commit an error. Now if you persuade me that my belief in the obligatory claim of others' interests is the result only of a foundationless psychological process of association of ideas, this persuasion will associate itself with the other association and will disrupt and destroy it. If I am a reasonable being, how can you expect me to continue to act according to that belief when you have convinced me that in the final analysis it is unreasonable?

From the moment when you succeed in showing me the part played by this unreasoning association of ideas, I throw off the power of this association over my conduct. Why should I respect a simple association of ideas, if in the present moment it is not to my interest to do so? And why should I feel the slightest remorse in violating this association, in as much as I know that I am violating nothing but an association of ideas, that I am only separating two ideas, dissipating an illusion, destroying a chimera? Moral sentiments move man, — true. But the opinion of man concerning the reality or the unreality of the basis of those sentiments — whether the sentiments are based upon objective reality of experience or merely upon imagination and unreasoning psychical associations — modifies profoundly man's moral sentiments. If the sentiment of obligation is said to rest upon belief, and this belief is said to be the result of illusion, what becomes of the sentiment of obligation? In destroying the foundations of the belief upon which the sentiment rested you destroy the foundations of the sentiment of obligation. If the sentiment of obligation is embarrassing, I may take no account of it and may disembarass myself of it. I understand now that it has no reason for existence. Believing and knowing that the notion of duty is only a figment of the imagination, a psychical fabrication, having no basis in fact, I cannot feel obligated by it. I cannot affirm in my actions a moral obligation which I deny in my thought and reason.

My moral hallucination may be useful to you

and others, but when I discover that the nature of obligation is only hallucinary and represents no objective reality, I cease to acknowledge obligation. I regard it not only as false but also as a nuisance, or even as harmful. From the moment I discover its true nature, I take advantage of my knowledge. The hallucinated, when he understands his deluded condition, is no longer hallucinated. The obligated person, when he is persuaded of duty's fictitious character, is no longer obligated, and will experience no pain when violating it. If the sentiment of moral obligation is an obsession, like melancholia or hypochondria, the best way to relieve or to remove the trouble is to work upon consciousness and bring to consciousness a knowledge of its true character. Just as melancholia or hypochondria is dissipated when you succeed in persuading the person that all his ideas, fears, dreams, are purely chimerical, and that his actions should not accord with them, so moral obligation is neutralized and dissipated when you persuade a man that it is simply a fabrication of psychical associations, illusions, chimeras. This light of knowledge, thrown into the mind, will dispel the spirits of darkness. Convince a man that his notion of obligation corresponds to nothing real, that it is of the same character as a vulgar hallucination,—then with this knowledge he frees himself from its power over his actions. A parallel: find some prisoners held in restraint by an imaginary and fictitious necessity; succeed in persuading them that their bondage is not in fact but only subjective, that their movements are not arrested by

external conditions, but only by an illusion builded in the mind; — the moment you succeed in persuading them of this, their bondage no longer exists. Any association of ideas that rests upon an error will be dissolved when the nature of the basis becomes known to reason. And according to this system, sympathy is an error, under the influence of which I imagine myself suffering in your place. Upon a deceptive resemblance or association I take you for myself. But morality cannot support itself upon illusions to command real actions. Would physical science command a traveller in the desert to journey towards the oasis which a mirage made appear to him? Will moral science command a man to pursue an intellectual mirage of identity of the interests of self and the interests of others? Thus this doctrine is reduced to the extremity of proposing a moral philosophy in theory only at the cost of destroying it in practice. The more you believe this doctrine that in seeking the good of others you are obeying a simple association of ideas, the less you will feel obligated to seek the good of others. The greater your faith in the theory, the less your faith in the sacredness of the obligation.¹

There are also recent attempts to make psychology *explain* altruism, and to ground the obligation to be altruistic. But the attempt to make the facts of psychology ground obligation is wholly without result. Psychology has done a great deal towards *explaining* the rise and development of altruistic feelings, ideas, and volitions, but it is wholly incapable of convincing an individual who

happens not to be altruistic that he *ought* to be altruistic. There is a fundamental difference between *explaining* how a man has come to think and feel and act as he does and *convincing him that he ought* to think and feel and act in a way which he does not will.

We may take as the best representative of what has been accomplished by recent psychology Baldwin's book, "Social and Ethical Interpretations"; but we shall find that while it *explains* obligation, it does not *justify* it.

In the introduction Baldwin says of his book, "The main thought which runs through it is the conception of the growth of the child's sense of personality." For our subject here we have culled only those passages which give the psychology of the child's growth in the sense of obligation, and have made a good many condensations and necessary changes in expression and arrangement.

"The child goes through three stages of personal thought, called 'projective' (his sense of others before he distinguishes between them and himself), then 'subjective' (his sense of himself as distinguished from others), then 'ejective' (the sense of others as like himself)."¹

"The 'ego' and the 'alter' are thus born together. Both are crude and unreflective, largely organic. And the two get purified and clarified together by the twofold reaction between project and subject, and between subject and eject. My sense of myself grows by imitation of you, and my sense of yourself grows in terms of my sense of myself. But *ego* and *alter* are

¹ Baldwin, "Social and Ethical Interpretations," p. 299.

thus essentially social; each is a *socius*, and each is an imitative creation. This give-and-take between the individual and his fellows, looked at generally, we may call the *Dialectic of Personal Growth*.”¹

“The dialectic may be read thus: my thought of self is in the main, as to its character as a personal self, filled up with my thought of others, distributed variously as individuals; and my thought of others, as persons, is mainly filled up with myself. In other words, but for certain minor distinctions in the filling, and for certain compelling distinctions between that which is immediate and that which is objective, *the ego and the alter are to our thought one and the same thing*.”²

When I say, “Being such and such a person, it is my interest to have such or such a fate,” I must *perforce* — that is, by the very same mental movement which gives the outcome in my own case — attribute to the other the same deserts and the same fate. But this sense of equal interest, desert, because of identical position in the evolution of selves, what is this but, in the abstract, the sense of justice, and in the concrete, the feeling of sympathy with the other? If I insist upon the gratification of my own wants at the expense of the legitimate wants of the “other,” then I in so far do violence to my sympathies and to my sense of justice.³

“The individual is the outcome of ‘habit’ and ‘suggestion.’ Social suggestion is the sum of the social influences which he takes in and incorporates in himself when he is in the receptive, imitative, attitude to the alter; habit is the body of formed material, already cast in the mould of a self, which he brings up for self-assertion and aggression, when he stands at the

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 21.

other pole of the relation to the alter, and exhibits himself as a bully, a tyrant, or at least as master of his own conduct."¹

The child reaches constantly a self of his own by understanding others better, and then understands others better by reason of his interpretation of them in terms of what he thinks of as himself. These two poles of thought constantly occupy him; and he gets them generalized in some degree in what is called the "habitual" self, on the one hand, over against the "imitative" or "accommodating" self, on the other hand. The habitual self is the reckless, bullying, braggadocio of a self; and the imitative self is the docile, teachable, retiring self. The first is the egoist, the selfish aggressor; the second is the unselfish, all-suffering altruist. Both grow up together by the very opposition which presupposes them both. So in his inner world the child reproduces the actual social world, and fits himself for an active place in it.²

But see, in this subtle give-and-take of elements for the building up of the social sense, how inextricably interwoven the ego and the alter really are! In short, *the real self is the bipolar self, the social self, the socius.*³

"If we ask at any time for a complete notion from outside of that boy's self, we cannot say that either the self of habit or the self of accommodation adequately expresses it. The only adequate expression of the boy is that which acquaints us with the whole dialectic of his progress, a dialectic which comprehends both these selves and the alter personalities which are progressive functions of his thoughts of himself; that is, *with the self of all the rich social relationships, or the 'socius.'*"⁴

It seems, then, a natural question to ask, whether the

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 227.

³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

boy comes to have any sense of just this inadequacy of his thought of self when he is thinking of himself in either way, either in the way of the habitual or of the accommodating self. In other words, does he go on to reflect upon the "*socius*," as a larger bond of union to the different private thoughts of himself? This is really the question of the evolution of the ethical sense put in closer psychological terms. Whether *obedience* comes by suggestion or by punishment, it has this genetic value: it leads to another refinement in the sense of self. The child finds himself stimulated constantly to deny his impulses, his desires, even his irregular sympathies, by conforming to the will of another. This other represents a regular, systematic, unflinching, but reasonable personality — still a person, but a very different person from the child's own. In this dawning sense of the larger limits which set barriers to personal freedom is the "copy" forming which is his personal authority or law. It is "projective" because he cannot understand it, cannot anticipate it, cannot find it in himself. And it is only by imitation that he is to reproduce it, and so arrive at a knowledge of what he is to understand it to be. So it is a "copy for imitation." The child may say to himself, Here is my ideal self, my final pattern, my "ought" set before me. My sense of moral ideal, therefore, is my sense of a possible perfect, regular will taken over *in me*, in which the personal and the social self — my habits and my social calls — are brought completely into harmony.¹

Besides his two selves, then, what more is there to the child? This: *a dominating other self, a new alter*, is there; that is the important thing. And what does it mean? It means, in the first instance, a line of conduct on his part which the obedience represents. But

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 41-43.

in this line of conduct we now have the real school-master to the boy. And in all his learning by this agency, he learns above all the great lesson essential to the development of his thought of self: that there is a something always present, an atmosphere, a circle of common interest, a family propriety, a mass of accepted tradition. *This is his first realization to himself of what the socius means.*¹

Now this is a new thought of self. In each of his straining efforts to obey, to do what he is told to do, his success or failure is a further defining of the limitations of one or the other of his old selves, and in so far the creation of a new self which sets law to both of them. Now this new self arises, as we have seen, right out of the competitions, urgencies, inhibitions of the old. There arises a thought of one who obeys, who has no struggle in carrying out the behests of the alter. The sense of a new, better, obedient self hovers before him. A few fights and he begins to grow accustomed to the presence of something in him which represents his father, mother, or, in general, *the law-giving personality*. So, as he understands the meaning of obedience better, through his own acting out of its behests in varied circumstances, the projective elements of the alter which thus sets law to him become subjective. The socius becomes more and more intimate as a law-abiding self of his own.²

Taking up the sense of morality, therefore, — the sense that we mean when we use the word “ought,” — we now have it. Let the child continue to act by the rule of either of his former partial selves, — the private habitual self or the accommodating capricious self of impulse and sympathy, — and this new ideal of a self, a self that fulfils law, comes up to call him to account.

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 53-55.

My father, says the child, knows and would say "what" and "how"; and later, when the father-self has proved not to know all "whats" and all "hows," then my teacher, my book, my inspired writer, my God, knows "what" and "how" still. In so far as I have learned from him, I also know; and this I expect you, my brother, my friend, my alter, to know too, for our common life together. And the sense of this my self of conformity to what he teaches and would have me do — this is, once for all, my conscience. The child, when once this sense of a self which is not but ought to be, comes to him, does everything under its law — whether his action conform to what he understands of it or whether he disobey and offend it. He is henceforth never innocent with the innocence of neutrality. He must think of the better with sorrow if he choose the worse, and of the worse with joy if he choose the better.¹

The child's imitative growth into a sense of ideal personality sets a *higher category of action* than either of the two concrete categories of spontaneous egoism and equally spontaneous generosity or sympathy. It is in the higher realm of assimilation, where it is a question of the assimilation of a new action *alternatively to a higher or to a lower category of habit*, that the sense of ethical obligation really takes its rise. The child feels the impulsion of all examples, both the selfish and the social, and if this impulsion were the "ought," then indeed he would have two "oughts," as on occasion he has two "musts"; but he now feels — after the ideal thought of personality has a good beginning in him — that some of these actions on both sides will assimilate to this ideal, are called for by this, will strengthen and reinforce this, while others will not; then comes the sense that these are good, and the rest in comparison with them are bad. He says: "I ought to do *this*,

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

since the good man, my ideal personality, does this; I ought not to do *that*, because he does it not." To act selfishly — or to act capriciously, even though the action be a generous one — is to undo my growth toward a law-abiding, reasonable, and, in its highest sense, *social* person.¹

Thus there is gradually formed in the child the thought of self which is law-abiding, regular in its behavior, not-at-all-capricious, but law-giving to him and to others. But this is *no longer simply personal intelligence*; it is now ethical intelligence; thinking for complex social ends; finding it unnatural and unreasonable to be either self-seeking or other-seeking as such; but finding it both natural and reasonable to be dutiful. This is the highest reach of intelligent growth and gives its true significance, as I take it, to what ethical writers call *practical reason*.²

"He now *judges all things from this ideal point of view*. Is it right? is now his question of conduct; and, Is he good? his question of man. And his own disquieting thoughts of himself turn on the same questions as applied to his conduct and his own presence. Nothing is so urgent in his life as the call to duty; nothing so utterly upsetting as the penalties which attach, in his own mind, to the neglect of this call. It would not be possible to put too strongly the revolutionary meaning of this intelligent morality. It is not only a great event in life-history; it marks also a new turn in social development — a turn *away from the intellectual as such to the social as such*, just as the period of early reflection marks a turn *away from the instinctive and emotional as such to the intellectual as such*."³

This doctrine of Baldwin's represents, in my

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 316-317.

² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 333.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 335-336.

opinion, the best that psychology has done in the way of *explaining* the rise of the sense of obligation in the individual person. I have not a word to say against it as a *psychological explanation of morality*. And if I have understood correctly Baldwin's purpose, it is limited to a scientific investigation of the origin and growth of the sense of obligation, which is regarded as an existent fact. I do not gather from his book the impression that he intends to prescribe a norm for human conduct to strive to attain.

With this acknowledgment of Baldwin's own intention concerning the application of his theory, I must now proceed to show why the theory is defective if used for *moral* (instead of purely psychological) purposes.

In the first place, to show that ego and alter are born together in the individual's consciousness accounts also for egoism, and can give no preference to altruism. The fact that my thought of self is mainly filled up with my thought of others, and my thought of others is mainly filled up with my thought of self, still leaves it an unsettled question as to whether the relation between the two thoughts may not be an antagonistic relation. The fact that I must think others when I think myself does not involve that I must think others as friends — I may think others as enemies. I think of my alter as a competitor. I think of him as possessing and experiencing what I do not possess and experience, something perhaps more desirable than what I have. The fact that my sense of self involves always the sense of the other, and my sense of the other involves always the sense of

self, is equally well the explanation of the origin and development of envy, jealousy, hatred, and strife. The "dialectic of personal growth" may be used as the explanation of egoism as aptly as of altruism, and involves no preference of either.

In the second place, Baldwin's account of how the two "lower" selves — the spontaneously egoistic and the spontaneously altruistic selves — become transcended in the third self, the higher, ideal personality, really leaves it an open question as to what content should be ascribed to this third self. Baldwin makes this new self that arises out of the competitions of the two lower selves a moral, law-abiding, "good" self. But, as a matter of fact, in numerous cases this new self that is born is an immoral, law-breaking, "bad" self. Baldwin's description of the stages of the process of arriving at the rational or reflective sense of personality may be correct; but he errs in making the issue of the process necessarily a good issue. The issue is very often bad. Many natures, instead of being trained to regular obedience, are trained to regular revolt. It is true that "the child finds himself called upon constantly to deny his impulses and desires, by conforming to the will of another, another that represents a very different person from the child's own." It is true that "the child gets a sense of limits which set barriers to personal freedom, a sense of a dominating other self." But it is not always true to speak of "his straining efforts to obey, to do what he is told to do." Instead of there arising "the thought of one who obeys, who has no struggle in carrying out the behests of the other," there arises often the

thought of one who disobeys, who refuses to carry out the behests of any other. "The sense of a new and better self that hovers before him" may be, not of "an obedient self," but of a disobedient self. "He grows accustomed to the presence of something that represents a law-giving personality," only to endeavor to overthrow it. He forms an ideal of a self that breaks law. He refuses to admit the domination of "my father, my teacher, my book, my inspired writer, my God." It is true that in the dialectic of personal growth there is gradually formed in the child a sense of an ideal self, a self that is not but ought to be; but this ideal self is not necessarily a "good" self. It is true that "the child grows into a sense of an ideal personality which sets a higher category of action than either of the two concrete categories of spontaneous egoism and equally spontaneous generosity or sympathy." But this higher category of action may be, not rational altruism, but rational egoism; not reflective goodness, but reflective badness; not a reasoned decision to be dutiful, but a reasoned decision to revolt. The dialectic of personal growth may lead, as it actually does in many cases, to the deliberate, reflective choice of egoism.

In the third place, the theory can be used only to *explain* a fact. It is a fact that certain individuals have the sense of the obligation to be altruistic. How did this sense of obligation arise and develop? That is the range of Baldwin's inquiry, and indicates the limitations of his results. Now it is also a *fact* that certain other individuals have not a sense of the obligation to be

altruistic. And there is absolutely nothing in the results of Baldwin's investigation that can be made use of to convince one of these individuals that he *ought* to be altruistic. The psychological theory may be ever so perfect as an *explanation* of how some men, or perhaps most men, come to be moral; but it does not offer in the least "a rational ground of obligation." For instance, I may say: "I am an egoist. The dialectic of personal growth, of which you speak, has not produced in me the will to promote others' good at the cost of my own good." What can you say to me, on the basis of this theory, that can have any effect towards converting me into an altruist? Nothing. All you can say is that my course of development has been different from that of most other men. You may regard this as bad fortune, but I may regard it as good fortune. I may prize highly this difference from others of my kind, just as I may prize highly an extraordinary development in the organization of my nervous system. I admit that both are "variations," but I contend that both are advantageous and *good*, and that neither renders me "immoral" or a "reprobate." As a psychologist, you may be able to *explain* how it came about that in my constitution there did not arise and develop a sense of obligation; but as a psychologist you cannot say to me that I was under moral obligation to become an altruist, or that I "ought" now to change to an altruist. I am an egoist. You, a psychologist, show me the elaborate process in which my companion has developed into an altruist. I say to you: "Yes, your description of the process is correct. Poor

fellow! He is a milk-sop. He was reared in a namby-pamby, goody-goody home, was brought up by servants, had only girls for playmates, went to a private school for 'molly-coddles,' and received always the sickly ministrations of other-worldly, devitalized priests. Poor fool! He has been made timid, cringing, grovelling, a weakling, 'a slave to morality,' a renouncer of his own good, an altruist. I, on the contrary, am an egoist. I know no law save that of my own will; I recognize no right save the limit to my might. I am the strong man, the 'superman.' You may study me, and may 'explain' me, but you cannot 'convert' me by your descriptions of psychical states and processes." A psychologist can explain the phenomenon of egoism when it appears, just as he can explain the phenomenon of altruism when it appears; but he cannot say that either one "ought" to be the other, or that either one is the "better," "nobler," "higher," or "preferable." The psychologist cannot *evaluate*; he is a scientist, and is limited to description. As a scientist he may be called on to describe how men have come to evaluate things and conduct in such and such a way; then he gives us a psychology of morals, just as in the psychology of religion he describes the phenomena of the religious consciousness. In the psychology of religion the psychologist does not say that an atheist is under obligation to believe in God; and in the psychology of morals he does not say that an egoist is obligated to prefer the good of others. Psychology studies man's volitions as facts of consciousness; it does not "prescribe" one volition as "preferable" to another,

and does not evaluate one volition as "bad" and another as "good." The moment a psychologist approves something as "good," or condemns something as "bad," that moment he is no longer psychologist, under the lead of intellect and science, but is changed into an ordinary man, under the lead of subjective emotion. Approval and condemnation are expressions of subjective emotion, individual will. Your will is different from mine. A certain thing is "good" to you because you will it; it is "bad" to me because I will it not. And this disagreement is final and unchangeable, at least so far as the achievements of psychology are concerned. No description of psychical processes can have any influence towards "converting" the will. And the true psychologist confines himself to *describing* facts. Psychology, as a science, would not think of saying that something "ought" to be different from what it is. A science cannot recognize lawless lapses in the regularity and uniformity of occurrences. It cannot recognize two planes — a lower plane of facts, and a higher plane of caprice interfering with occurrences in the plane of facts. Psychology is descriptive, not prescriptive; it is scientific, not normative.

In conclusion, then, our problem of finding "a rational ground of obligation," a means for converting an egoist into an altruist, remains still unsolved.

CHAPTER VII

PHYSIOLOGY AND OBLIGATION

A SIXTH attempt at solving the problem of how to cause a man to pass from egoism to altruism may be called the physiological attempt. This theory goes a step farther than the theory about association of interests in the idea of an individual. The association of interests does not come from ourselves alone, but from a very remote past. Those who have engendered us have engendered these associations in us. The law of association acted upon those who preceded us no less than it acts upon us. It regulated the relations of their ideas to one another, and the relations of their interests to one another. Our ancestors had to have a certain amount of sociability in order to exist; they soon realized that men must live in groups, and that concession and coöperation were necessary for survival. It was found to be advantageous to self to have a certain respect and consideration for the interests of others. Trust and fidelity, sympathy and benevolence, developed. Thus our ancestors came gradually to associate the interests of others with the interests of self, until the two interests became intimately associated and identified in their ideas. As these associations little by little took place, a modification in the brain resulted, was guarded, and was

transmitted down to us. This was an organization of experiences and a transmission of them through an organic structure. Altruistic virtues became embedded in the race as instincts. The association of interests has now become so intimate that it is extremely seldom that there is found a complete egoist, one who is bent exclusively upon his own good, and cares not the least what befalls others. So efficacious have been the influences of environment and heredity that in general we all seek the interests of others instinctively, naturally, as equal to our own interests or even superior. This altruistic mode of action has been wrought into the nervous organization of the brain. Although the altruistic emotions have been derived, they are now organic; and their disappearance from human nature as instinctive tendencies towards or against certain lines of action could only be slow and painful.

We find the laws of altruism ready-made in our brains, established in advance by the former generations. And just as we have not created them, we cannot destroy them. Just as we have not placed them in ourselves, we cannot take them out of ourselves. They have roots so much more ineradicable as they come farther from the past. In fact, it is not I who obligate myself, or, more accurately, who necessitate myself; my will alone could not have this power. Moral necessity is only a manifestation in me of a power which is anterior and superior to me, the power of the past, — all those who have preceded me, — my parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, etc., throughout time. In my turn, I contribute my share of deter-

mination for the future. The past moves and directs the present; the present moves and directs the future.¹

According to this theory, we have a moral instinct, acquired by experience, and transmitted by heredity. Spencer says: "Just in the same way that I believe the intuition of space, possessed by any living individual, to have arisen from organized and consolidated experiences of all antecedent individuals who bequeathed to him their slowly-developed nervous organizations — just as I believe that this intuition, requiring only to be made definite and complete by personal experiences, has practically become a form of thought, apparently quite independent of experience; so do I believe that the experiences of utility organized and consolidated through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding nervous modifications, which, by continued transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition — certain emotions responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility."²

What is conscience, according to this theory? "Impressions of pleasure" and "experiences of utility," accumulated by habitude, slowly modified by the corresponding alterations of the environment, transmitted by heredity from generation to generation, — this is the fundamental in conscience. The instinct of obligation is at bottom

¹ Cf. Guyau, *op. cit.*, pp 327-330

² Letter from Spencer to Mill, quoted in Spencer, "Data of Ethics," Westminster edition, 1900, p. 123.

only the social instinct. The moral instinct is, so to say, the collective force stored up in the individual. Whenever he would oppose the force of his individual interest or of his fleeting passion to that sort of social force that resides within him, he feels the sentiment of constraint. There results, then, a necessity altogether natural and social. It is thus that nature and society, in heaping up centuries on centuries, fashion little by little each man to their image, and reproduce a collective constitution in the individual constitution. Conscience has the character simply of physical or physiological necessity; but its imperative authority is not an affair of external authority. It is an internal reproduction of that authority. We do not merely conform ourselves to the command of the social environment, by a sort of passive obedience, but, thanks to heredity, we reproduce it in ourselves, and finish by commanding ourselves. The judgment of conscience, wholly internal, is a copy in ourselves of the originally external tribunals. The external and social necessity takes on thus the form of moral obligation or internal commandment. The reason that we feel the coerciveness of conscience is because there is a struggle in us between an inferior and a superior inclination. The superior inclination has not yet become sufficiently inherent in our organic nature to fulfil its function spontaneously and without obstacle. But with time the sentiment of obligation will finish by being no longer present in consciousness. There will come about such perfect adjustment that moral conduct will become perfectly natural.¹

¹ Cf. Spencer, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131.

Then we shall love our family, our country, humanity, just as naturally as we to-day love life, nourishment, and the light of day. Thus this doctrine replaces the moral obligation of the idealists with a sort of physical or physiological obligation and natural necessity. Moral science is not a matter of finding out what *ought* to be, but of finding out what cannot but be. Being given primitive egoism, the task is to find out by what physical necessity, not simply logical or moral necessity, it will be transformed into the love of others; to show by what inevitable changes beings who sought at first their own well-being will end in seeking necessarily the well-being of others. The appeal is to the sweeping force of education, to the force of public laws, and especially to the slow and gradual action of heredity. It is not a metaphysical morality that is produced in man, but a morality altogether organic or even physical, present in the organs and inherent in the very constitution of the human brain, like the docility that has become inherent in the domestic animals.¹

The moral imperative is thus traced to an instinct that results from our cerebral organization. Morality depends upon the health of the brain; immorality is the symptom of an abnormality of brain, a lack of equilibrium in organization and functioning. Morality is founded upon the constitution of human nature which has become altruistic without intending it.

To lead humanity to practise disinterestedness, we must count only upon the hereditary habitudes

¹ Cf. Fouillée, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-12.

of altruism and sympathetic devotion, produced mechanically by the solidarity of interests in the midst of society — a mechanical interweaving of interests which tend to fuse more and more. To propose abstract precepts and rules in the hope of making men moral is without any virtue; the only means is to exclude from society the black sheep and to favor the multiplication of the good sheep, to perfect the race by well-assorted matings. This would secure the inheritance and perpetuity of altruistic qualities, and would bring about such a unity of the race that selfishness or egoism would be impossible.

Let us now consider some of the principal objections to the physiological attempts at grounding the obligation to be altruistic.

It should be noticed, first, that while this theory gives an elaborate account of how egoism is transformed into altruism by nature, it leaves little opportunity for man's employing his knowledge of the natural process to cause some particular individual to make the transition. It offers an explanation of altruism, but not much of an instrument for our present use in converting an egoist into an altruist.

In the second place, if this theory were true, man's knowledge of its truth would destroy the power of obligation. His rationality would disorganize the instinct. As Guyau pointed out, the consciousness of this sentiment as an organized instinct would suffice to free us little by little from it, or, in other words, to progressively disorganize what heredity, habit, and the social environment have organized in us. This is the

fundamental objection to a theory which bases obligation upon instinct rather than reason.¹

Instinctive obligation has its greatest power over us only on the condition that we are ignorant of its true character. We imagine ourselves independent and responsible, directors of our own moral actions, agents not under the dominion of sentiments and instincts inherited from the past. If you reveal to us the true state of things, and we accept your doctrine, how can this help tending to weaken considerably the strength of our moral sentiments and their power over our actions? To know that my sense of obligation does not correspond to anything real in my present world, that it is simply a peculiar arrangement in my nervous organization transmitted to me by my remote ancestors, that at bottom it is not rational, is a long step towards freeing myself from its bondage. If painful to me, or if even a nuisance, I know its true nature, and will not experience pain in disregarding its injunctions. Knowing that real obligation does not exist, I shall experience no pain, or shall experience progressively less and less pain, when I violate this irrational instinct. I shall in a short time so master it that I shall neutralize it or completely drive it away. Why should I do this action which my intellect tells me is contrary to my interest? Because if I do not do it I shall derange the nervous organization bequeathed to me by my ancestors, and this will cause me pain through the mediation of disagreeable

¹ For a very thorough exposition of this criticism, see Guyau, *op. cit.*, pp. 325-343, and 395-404, of which the present account is practically a mere epitome.

images and ideas! But these ideas and images, which do not correspond to anything real and are like any other hallucinations, will be easily dissipated when I remember what they are. Thus shall I be perfectly free from any dominion of inherited nervous hallucinations, and shall be free from their product — moral obligation.

You tell me that my sympathy for a man is a simple accord of nerves, an alliance of temperaments, a symmetrical beating of hearts. But I attribute my sympathy to something other than my nerves; namely, my will. If you persuade me that in reality my sympathy is only an affair of nerves, a fatal movement on their part, then this knowledge of sympathy's true nature will enter into the field and will disturb the action of the nerves, will disarrange their accord with others. The moment that I am impelled to do an act of sacrifice, I remember that sympathy is only a nervous contagion; and this idea acting, as all ideas do, upon the nerves, will counterbalance and displace that other nervous affection. If you succeed in convincing me that certain of my acts so important still remain under the control of instinct, my will and reason will throw off this domination. Present knowledge and rationality will undo in a short time the illusory work that my ancestors have wrought in me. Reason demands of instinct what it is, where it has come from, where it is going, and what is its principle. If reason approves, very well; but if not, away with instinct, and without remorse. Instinctive sympathy is incapable of leading me to sacrifice unless I forget that it is this sympathy that is leading me.

A sympathy that is purely instinctive will be suppressed upon being recognized.

A third objection may be stated thus: If this theory were true, it would not really explain *altruism*, because the individual, in seeking instinctively the interests of others as coinciding with and not distinguished from his own, is not intentionally seeking the interests of others as such, and may still be regarded as possibly egoistic if a conflict of interests necessitated a preference. His sympathetic sentiments are only egoistic sentiments awakened by an intellectual and nervous contagion; his love is but happiness in the happiness of others;— what is this but to say that the happiness of others is only an intermediary by which he follows still his own happiness? A man may yet be an egoist when the pleasures and pains of others are sources of pleasure and pain for himself. That is an imperfect altruism when the good of others is sought because it coincides with or promotes his own good. If the fact that he receives pleasure from the pleasure of another is his reason for seeking the other's pleasure, he will cease to seek it whenever a means of procuring a greater pleasure for himself arises. On the other hand, sympathetic pain may induce a person to relieve the suffering of his neighbor, not out of regard for the feelings of the sufferer, but simply to free himself from pain. The relief offered to the sufferer is a means of suppressing the painful feelings of self. No secure principle of altruism can be based on the agreement of others' good with our own; for if the interests disagree, as they often do, no standard is left for deciding between the

competing claims. A satisfactory basis of altruism must be able to establish the principle that in case of a conflict between one's own good and the good of others, the good of the others must be sought. Altruism is more than a mere matter of sympathy; it is above all a conative disposition to do good. This latter is the cause rather than the result of sympathy.¹

When altruism is explained as an instinctive combination of the interests of others with the interests of self, an organic sympathy, its truly moral nature is taken away, for an instinctive sympathy is not the result of a self-conscious and self-directing will or intelligence. Instinctive sympathy, if not called egoistic, must be said to be neither egoistic nor altruistic. It is capricious and lawless, and the ready victim of suggestibility. It may be present even in the absence of that adequate deliberative process which the developed ethical consciousness calls for. It unites for bad as well as for good. It turns in any direction. It is capable of subsisting side by side with crime, and of being absent from virtue. Moral altruism is more than instinctive sympathy. It is the work of reason and will.

What this theory substitutes in place of the categorical obligation of the older moralists is an instinctive sympathy or altruism. We love ourselves, that is the first principle. Then we attach ourselves to others who resemble us, and seek ourselves in them. Then there is born a sort of love due to a mutual resemblance, a mutual analogy. What passes in one communicates itself to another

¹ Cf. Westermarck, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 109-111.

by means wholly physical; and, in fact, the love of others is a phenomenon of nervous contagion. Extend this benevolent contagion to humanity, and then there reigns in the world philanthropy. But this position runs into the following absurdity: In the others you love only yourself; nevertheless, you must love them more than yourself. In the others you love only your resemblance; but for that pale image of yourself, you must sacrifice yourself, — if necessary, you must destroy the original in order to conserve the copy.¹

Fourthly, if this theory were true, altruism would resemble an "obsession," an organic trouble of the brain, a derangement in the nervous organization, and *would lose the character of moral obligation*. The attempt to make altruism repose in a hereditary, instinctive inclination of man installs therewith an absolute necessity which robs it of its moral and obligatory nature. To sympathize instinctively, to suffer passively with others, to experience the reflex action of the same emotions, is not sufficient for the character of moral altruism. Such instinctive altruism would more resemble an "obsession" that possesses the diseased mind and drives it incessantly and irresistibly to an action.

A member of society feels by reflex action the pleasures and pains of the other members. Our hearts respond to the affections of others; and in the same way our brains, which at first we think belong to us alone, have in reality a host of points of contact with the brains of our similars. The intellectual life and the life of affection are both instinctively sympathetic, one as much as the other.

¹ Cf. Guyau, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

The same currents of ideas and sentiments traverse the different heads, and like a current of electricity through a series of detached links, bind them into a chain. We are members one of another through the head and through the heart. We are all shocked at the same intellectual absurdity and at the same moral ugliness. — But is not all this a fatal sympathy between men, explained physiologically by the laws of reflex action, explained psychologically by the laws of association of ideas; and in both ways a fatal mechanism destructive of the essence of moral obligation?¹

This theory says that a human being finds that his interests and desires accord instinctively with those of his kind, and that he seeks necessarily what tends to their good, and cherishes necessarily a vigorous hatred for what tends to their hurt. But such a being cannot be said really to love any one; he fulfils only the rôle of a useful machine. External necessity may bring together our spheres of action; it may impel me towards you and you towards me, and may bind us together. Internal necessity, which in this theory is called instinctive sympathy or altruism, may do even more: it may cause our mechanisms to work in equilibrium and harmony. But still, is this the ideal of fraternity and benevolence of which we dream? No; because neither of us has willed it; neither of us has willed the other. We felt ourselves carried in spite of ourselves towards one another, moved by the same necessity that regulates the movements of the planets. Has either of us made a step towards the other which was not necessary and fatal?

¹ Cf. Fouillée, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

Then why should we have any gratitude or love towards each other? What a moral pauper this doctrine would make me! What I believe I give you, an instinct gives you in my place. There is nothing gratuitous and voluntary. When I would sacrifice myself for you, when I would die for you, it is by a disguised physiological necessity. But to sympathize truly would be to rise above the apparent sympathy which this theory recognizes: it would be not merely to be affected together, but to will to be affected together, to will to suffer together. True sympathy, instead of being a negation of disinterested love of others, would be the highest form of disinterested love. In the ideal society, when we can all count upon each other, and shall be sure both of ourselves and others, and purest love shall penetrate each heart, it will not be fatality, but *will*, *will* completely master of itself.¹

A fifth objection is that the facts of experience prove the theory untrue. The doctrine of hereditary moral principles amounts to this: the type of an ideal society is innate in our brain, just as the type of a nest is innate in the brain of a bird; only it is an idea more abstract, and less mixed up with material forms, because it expresses and summarizes social relations, which are more complex than the relations of the diverse materials of the nest. But the innateness of moral ideas cannot be accepted, even though ascribed to heredity. A hereditary morality could not impel us towards definite acts; it could not furnish us with specific innate judgments concerning the right. We do not inherit a ready-made code of morals, determining

¹ Cf. Guyau, *op. cit.*, pp. 398-404.

in advance our conduct; we inherit only a few instincts which we, under the influence of environment and education, make into our moral code. The matter stands the same with morality as with intelligence. Aids are as necessary to moral genius as to intellectual genius, that it may persist and develop. We are not born with the problems of geometry worked out in the brain, or with certain airs of music written as in a phonograph; there are, however, certain persons with strong natural dispositions towards mathematics or music. The same is true in morality; certain children are born with vague dispositions towards courage and personal virtue, or pity and social affection. But these are general tendencies or capacities, and are not specific precepts. Heredity loses nearly all its force when it comes to the transmission among men of virtues so abstract, so complex, and so varied in effects, as justice and injustice, right and wrong. It is incapable of directing in any precise sense the life and actions of men. This theory, therefore, judges man too much like an animal, with whom hereditary habitudes form such automatism. A hunting dog may know how to hunt from the start; but a child does not know how to read at birth. Even in animals, hereditary instinct needs to be supplemented greatly by education. The bird raised in a cage does not know well how to build a nest, having never seen a nest or learned from experience. Likewise, the song bird removed from others does not sing; and if placed with song birds of another kind, learns their song. Man is similar. He can be taught to speak either a moral language or an immoral language. His conscience can be

awakened or obscured, according to the circumstances and the environment.¹

Wundt, in commenting on this doctrine, says, in substance: We can comprehend that in the nervous system certain nerve connections are formed, and that thereby a disposition to reflexive and automatic actions of a purposeful character become inherited. But how out of the arrangement of the nervous system moral conceptions can arise, is and remains a mystery. Even those physiologists who cherish the fantastic hypothesis that the brain's nerve cells are permanent supporters or carriers of ideas, have in general not ventured to champion the proposition that the inheritance of the cells with their ideas passes from the ancestors to their descendants. The matter is still worse when it comes to empirical proofs for this moral use of the doctrine of heredity. If it cannot at all be said that such elementary phenomena of consciousness as simple sensations or space perceptions can be proved innate, how can one talk of inborn "moral perceptions," perceptions which presuppose a vast number of very complex empirical ideas with reference to the actor himself, and to his fellow-men, and to the external world? In comparison with this theory that "moral instincts" and "moral ideas" are inherited "ready-made," even the old naive view that the chief contents of morality, metaphysics, and logic came as a divine gift to each person upon his entrance into the world has at least the advantage of being simpler.²

¹ Cf. Guyau, *op. cit.*, pp. 328-332.

² Cf. Wundt, *op. cit.*, Bd. II, S. 22-23.

This theory counts too much upon the force of habitude and heredity, the force of instinct; and too little upon the force of intelligence and reason. It does not recognize sufficiently the intimate reaction of intelligence or of ideas, by virtue of which man creates for himself a motive and spring to action that are superior to instinct.

With inferior beings, instinct is almost purely mechanical. It embraces only few actions, but is very strong. As intelligence develops, it comes to regulate more and more actions; and instinct begins to disappear in those actions which intelligence takes charge of. Intelligence displaces instinct as a guide. In man the intelligence modifies prodigiously the influences of instinct and hereditary habitude. Man comes to know what he does and why he does it. He passes from the action itself to the end it is fitted to subserve; and, if the instinctive action is not the most appropriate, or has hurtful results, instinct is checked, and reason directs the action. "The moral instinct" is in the same condition as any of the other instincts. It, too, gives place to intelligence and reason. The intelligence intervenes, reduces to system, and subordinates moral instincts to certain abstract principles. Instinct becomes superseded and supplanted by reason.

In addition to the foregoing objections, it should also be noticed that the basal assumption of the physiological solutions — the assumption that egoism is the primary and essential trait of man, and that altruism is secondary and derived — has never been established. In fact, all the later evidence gathered by the students of evolution

indicates that altruism is as much a primary instinct in man as is egoism. The two tendencies are equal and have always existed side by side. They extend together as far back in the history of man as we can go, and also extend down into the life of the animals. Egoism is traced back to the fundamental instinct of nutrition; altruism is traced back to the fundamental instinct of reproduction. Both these instincts are primary in all forms of life. Every living being, obeying the law of self-preservation, devotes its energies to feed itself; and, obeying the law of species-preservation, devotes its energies to feed its young. "Sympathy, tenderness, unselfishness, and the long list of virtues which make up Altruism, are the direct outcome and essential accompaniment of the reproductive process. Without some rudimentary maternal solicitude for the egg in the humblest forms of life, or for the young among higher forms, the living world would not only suffer, but would cease. For a time in the life-history of every higher animal the direct, personal, gratuitous, unrewarded help of another creature is a condition of existence. . . . The vicarious principle is shot through and through the whole vast web of Nature; and if one actor has played a mightier part than another in the drama of the past, it has been self-sacrifice."¹ "Had there been no Altruism — Altruism in the definite sense of unselfishness, sympathy, and self-sacrifice for Others, the whole higher world of life had perished as soon as it was created. For hours, or days, or weeks in the early infancy of all higher animals, maternal

¹ Drummond, "The Ascent of Man," pp. 17-18.

care and sympathy are a condition of existence.”¹

Finally, should the physiological theory establish its facts, it would still fail to answer our problem. There are men who are altruistic. Very true. But why *ought* men to be altruistic? You may observe, count, analyze, the phenomena that take place; you may keep a registry of sensations and emotions; and you may search out the origins of instincts and sentiments; but from all these accumulated facts, how can you arrive at a prescription of something that *ought* to be done, or deduce from them a *duty*? There is the difficulty. According to any inductive procedure, duty can be only an anticipation of conduct, an expectation of what is to happen. “The sun ought to rise to-morrow morning” must be the same kind of judgment as “I ought not to lie.” Imperfect as are the physiological solutions as an *explanation* of morality, they are utterly impossible as a *justification of obligation*.

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

CHAPTER VIII

EVOLUTION AND OBLIGATION

THIS chapter considers the possibility of a solution of our problem through the general doctrines of evolution. The outlines of evolution may be described briefly as follows: Throughout all organic existence, lack of adaptation to the environment beyond a certain varying degree is fatal. Certain conditions in the environment correspond with the essential requirements of organic life; and without adaptation to them life cannot be maintained. Evolution has taken place by the natural selection of those varieties of living things which happened to be best fitted for survival in the struggle for existence. Organisms which had developed advantageous modifications tended to survive, and to transmit their modified structure to descendants; while organisms without such modifications were less able to preserve their life and to hand it on to successors. Whenever more perfect and less perfect forms of life could not exist together, the better adapted—that is, those which had developed a structure better suited to the environment—were “selected” to survive.

One application of this general theory of evolution is its use as a complete explanation of human nature, mental and social, as well as physical.

Mental, as well as bodily, traits admitted of modification and inheritance; hence it followed that sentiments and ideas leading to actions which promoted life were encouraged and developed by natural selection. Thus the natural necessities and conditions of life contributed to bring about morality. A certain measure of morality was a condition of continued existence. The social state was necessary for man; and certain elementary moral conditions were necessary for the social state — for example, some justice, some cooperation, some sympathy, some fidelity to agreements, some obedience to law. The primitive peoples who infringed these conditions of existence were not slow in disappearing, making place for beings more moral, that is to say, for beings more intelligent and knowing better how to adapt themselves to the conditions of existence. Without doubt many tribes disappeared because they were incapable of conceiving a social system and the restrictions which it imposed. Those families and tribes in which the parental and filial and fraternal feelings were strongest presented a more united, and therefore stronger, front against the hostile influences. The qualities of sympathy and benevolence which united men contributed to their security in danger, and to their success in conflict. Those races in which they were most developed, other things being equal, obtained the mastery over and exterminated those races in which these feelings were relatively weaker.

Thus the course of social evolution had the effect of gradually bringing out and cultivating those tendencies in the individual which promoted the

welfare of the community, and of repressing those individual tendencies which were hostile to social welfare. Not sympathy and benevolence only, but honesty, justice, and all the social virtues had a similar history, inasmuch as they contributed to the life of those possessing them. Moral relations, and the feelings corresponding to them, tended to greater certainty and fulness of life on the part of those who possessed them, and hence were favored in the operation of the selective process, and became assimilated into the tissue of human nature. Through the operation of the natural laws of human development the wicked were cut off from the earth, while the righteous remained in it and left their possessions to their children. For those groups were fittest to survive in which each member, in feeling and in act, was most at one with the whole. Thus the course of evolution has tended to produce not only an ideal but an actual identification of individual and social interests, in which each man finds his own good in that of his fellows. The two things have developed together — the actual or objective solidarity between the individual and the whole, and the subjective reflection of the fact, sympathy with the feelings of others.¹

This is a brief account of the doctrines of evolutionistic ethics in its historical aspect. And evolutionistic ethics is primarily a history of an order

¹ For a thorough sketch of the evolution of altruism, see Westermarck's chapter on the Origin and Development of the Altruistic Sentiment, in his work, "The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas," Vol. II, pp. 186-228, and Drummond's book, "The Ascent of Man."

of sequent facts and relations. It is an account of the origin and growth of moral facts, explaining their nature and constitution by showing how they have come to be what they are. The value of the work it has done along this line is inestimable. Sometimes, however, it is not content with being merely historical, but attempts to be *regulative* as well. Under this aspect it holds that the discovery of the course and the method of evolution up to the present reveals the end and aim of the order, and that this teleological revelation enables us to point out the course of action which human nature ought consciously and intentionally to follow. Adaptation to environment is necessary for life, and organisms unable to adapt themselves pass away. Adaptation to environment is thus an essential means towards self-preservation and race preservation, self-development and race development. And should this preservation and development be regarded as the end of conduct, adaptation to environment becomes an obligatory rule of conduct. The possession of moral qualities on the part of an individual is seen to be a condition of "selection" in the evolutionary process; and hence evolutionistic ethics imposes the possession of moral qualities upon the individual as obligatory. And it makes use of the invariableness of nature's workings as a sanction to enforce upon the individual a due observance of his obligation.

In this way the doctrines of evolution are made to contribute towards the solution of the difficult conflict between egoism and altruism, and to yield a moral obligation in favor of the latter.

Evolutionistic ethics does not rest content with having shown historically how some individuals, or perhaps most individuals, have come to feel and regard themselves as so organically connected with others that their own good cannot be separated from that of the others; but it claims to be able to place upon each individual the moral obligation of altruism. The theory proclaims that altruism has been selected by the course of natural evolution, and that the individual is morally obligated to "promote the course of evolution." It holds that altruism is one of the phases of the end towards which the universe is driving, and that the individual is obligated to pursue the ideal that nature outlines to him, "to follow nature," and thus promote or advance the movement to come.

The moral ideal is thus identified with the trend of nature, with the last term of its evolution. The final term of the *natural* evolution of conduct is also the highest ideal of conduct considered from a *moral* point of view. Good conduct is that which is harmonious with the end of the evolutionary process. The end of the natural evolution of humanity is a perfect social life; and so the moral man is he whose aim is in accord with this end and with the necessary conditions imposed by the physical and social environment.

Let us now consider the objections to the general evolutionistic solutions. Throughout the following criticism it should be distinctly borne in mind that the criticism is of evolutionistic ethics only inasmuch as *regulative*. There is no intention of making even the slightest disparagement of the

work of evolutionistic ethics inasmuch as *descriptive*. Only praise and gratitude are due the historical and scientific procedure. But for the regulative procedure we must have, perhaps, a different award.

Before undertaking the criticism of "regulative" evolutionistic ethics in its purely ethical aspects, we may mention a criticism which may be passed upon its supposed "facts."¹ The theory of natural selection does not explain the fundamental phenomenon which it receives without question as its starting-point. Natural selection always implies modifications; but it does not itself initiate changes. It only "selects" the fitter variations for continued existence, and exterminates the unfit. But variation is necessary before natural selection can decide which is better adapted to the environment and hence fitter to survive. Natural selection would have no material to work on if the different individuals of the species or race did not strike out a variety of characters. No progressive modification of a race of organisms would be possible if the individual organisms did not tend to vary in function and structure. Those that were adapted to the environment would be selected once for all, and those not adapted would be destroyed. Thus evolution requires the striking out of new modifications as well as the selection and transmission of the best: variation is as necessary to progressive development as is natural selection. We need not profess any definite and final theory of the obscure laws of variation; but

¹ Cf. Sorley, "The Ethics of Naturalism," pp. 151-168, 263-274.

we can say that variation has a twofold source: it may be the direct effect of external forces, or it may be caused by the energy stored up in the organism in growth. In this latter case the individual exhibits what has been called "subjective selection" — a definite mode of reaction upon the environment, choosing what interests, or pleases, or suits. Subjective selection is among alternatives offered by the environment, but it is due to conditions which are within the organism. In human life these internal conditions are to a large extent intelligent purposes. In the realm of intelligence, natural selection is supplemented or even replaced by "purposive" selection. The end is foreseen, and means are deliberately chosen for it. The end which natural selection might blindly achieve by exterminating unfit varieties is aimed at directly by intelligent purpose, and brought about with little waste or destruction. The rule of natural selection terminates whenever conscious beings anticipate its operation by intelligent purposive action. Now it is in this realm of conscious action, determined by an idea of its end, that morality appears. Had natural selection been the only force in operation, mankind would have accomplished but a small part of the path of moral progress which it has actually traversed. Along the whole line intelligent subjective selection is implied; and, as civilization advances, reflection and rational choice assume a larger and larger share in its guidance. So no account of human development can be accepted which ignores the presence and influence of intelligent purposive selection. But the theory of evolu-

tion overlooks this factor, and emphasizes only "natural" selection. Hence its "facts" must be regarded as an insufficient basis for the explanation of man's moral development.

Another criticism of the "facts" of this theory is that they exaggerate the rôle of antagonistic competitive struggle. "The initial step in any 'progress' is *variation*; this is not so much struggle *against* other organisms, as it is *invention* or discovery of some *new* way of acting, involving better adaptation of hitherto merely latent natural resources, use of some possible food or shelter not previously utilized. The struggle against other organisms at work preserves from elimination a species already fixed — quite a different thing from the variation which occasions the introduction of a higher or more complex species."¹

Passing now to the strictly ethical criticisms, we notice that in reply to our question "What is to be done in case of a necessary choice between egoism and altruism?" these theories give no answer other than this: "Nature is causing altruism to triumph over egoism little by little; to promote the movement of evolution is man's duty." But this is not a satisfactory answer, for two reasons. We may dispute the truthfulness of the premises, and we may dispute the validity of the conclusion drawn. We may maintain that the statement that nature is causing altruism to triumph over egoism is hypothetical and doubtful; and we may maintain that even were it true that altruism is triumphing over egoism, altruism would not thereby be proved morally preferable.

¹ Dewey and Tufts, "Ethics," p. 371.

On the one hand, then, we may deny the statement that unselfishness has been chosen by natural selection. We may say, with Wundt, that we comprehend how the strongest of a species survives, for we see in each and every case of experience that the stronger obtains the victory from the weaker. We do not comprehend how the unselfish obtains the victory over the selfish, since in the individual cases of experience this is not seen. It is in accordance with the principle of natural selection that Nietzsche draws his conclusion that the strong shall overcome the weak. The doctrine of the triumph of altruism over egoism, instead of making use of the facts of individual experience and applying them to the general development, is an attempt to construe the facts of individual experience in accordance with the hypothesis of a preconceived general development.¹ It is a general law of life that every animal responds to an attack by a defence, which is often a counter-attack. This is a primitive instinct, with its source in reflex action. It is said that an animal, after its brain has been removed, will still bite any one who hurts it. Without this instinct life would be impossible. The beings with whom it was best developed have survived most easily in the struggle for existence. In man this instinct is very diversified, but exists, nevertheless. In order to survive, it is necessary to be able to strike him who strikes you. Vengeance has been biologically necessary for survival. The assertion that "natural selection" has specially favored altruism cannot be proved.

On the other hand, with reference to the validity

¹ Cf. Wundt, *op. cit.*, Bd. II, S. 21-22.

of the conclusion drawn from the supposed trend of evolution, we may find objection to the doctrine that the moral ideal is to discover the course of nature and to promote it. We may conceive that the universe *ought* to go differently from the way we discover it to be going, and that we, instead of adapting ourselves to its way, should strive with all our might to make it adapt itself to our way, the right way. Huxley vigorously denounced the immorality of the Cosmic Process. He contended that "the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it."¹ "Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step, and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process."²

It is illusory to seek in nature a type of the good to be striven for by us, and able to place us under moral obligation. We cannot know the foundation of things and the ultimate aim of nature, to act in the same direction. We cannot know for certain that nature has any aim or meaning. You demand of me to "follow nature" — I refuse. Nature is not moral. Never are the *natural consequences* of an act connected with the *intention* of the act. If you throw yourself into the sea and are unable to swim, you will be drowned, no matter whether your act was to commit suicide or to save some one from death. If you have a strong constitution, you may be guilty of indulgences, intemperances, and dissipations; but if you have a weak constitution, perfectly innocent enjoyments

¹ Huxley, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

² *Ibid*, p. 81.

entail great suffering. The "natural sanctions," considered as "moral sanctions," are corruptible. If you have been guilty of some intemperance, a few drops of the right tincture will buy immunity from the suffering due. The utterances of John Stuart Mill on the subject of conforming to nature are classic. He says: "The word Nature has two principal meanings: it either denotes the entire system of things, with the aggregate of all their properties, or it denotes things as they would be, apart from human intervention. In the first of these senses, the doctrine that man ought to follow nature is unmeaning; since man has no power to do anything else than follow nature; all his actions are done through, and in obedience to, some one or many of nature's physical or mental laws. In the other sense of the term, the doctrine that man ought to follow nature, or, in other words, ought to make the spontaneous course of things the model of his voluntary actions, is equally irrational and immoral. Irrational, because all human action whatever consists in altering, and all useful action in improving, the spontaneous course of nature; immoral, because the course of natural phenomena being replete with everything which when committed by human beings is most worthy of abhorrence, any one who endeavored in his actions to imitate the natural course of things would be universally seen and acknowledged to be the wickedest of men."¹ "In sober truth, nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another are nature's everyday performances."² "If Nature and Man are both

¹ Mill, "Three Essays on Religion," pp. 64-65. ² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

the works of a Being of perfect goodness, that Being intended Nature as a scheme to be amended, not imitated, by man.”¹

The doctrine of a “moral progress” in evolution must also be criticised. It is held by the evolution theory that man’s continuance in existence implies modification of his faculties, and that this modification involves development. Of course it is impossible for man to continue to live without going through a series of changes; but change does not necessarily mean a progressive development. Change may be to a lower condition. Degeneration is as much a fact as improvement. And sometimes the change may be for neither better nor worse. “The survival of the fittest,” then, is not always the survival of the best. “If our hemisphere were to cool again, the survival of the fittest might bring about, in the vegetable kingdom, a population of more and more stunted and humbler and humbler organisms, until the ‘fittest’ that survived might be nothing but lichens, diatoms, and such microscopic organisms as those which give red snow its colour; while, if it became hotter, the pleasant valleys of the Thames and Isis might be uninhabitable by any animated beings save those that flourish in a tropical jungle. They, as the fittest, the best adapted to the changed conditions, would survive.”² The statement that the changes men have gone through, are now going through, and will go through, are a progress towards the better, is difficult, if not impossible, to prove. It is a mere assumption when it is said

¹ Mill, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

² Huxley, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81.

that evolution is an ethical process, and the survival of the fittest is a survival of the morally best. This ethical conception of evolution is a presupposition, and is not a deduction from the facts of evolution. When this presupposition is not made, the distinction between good and evil in the evolutionary movement can be solely the distinction between success and failure in the struggle for existence. The better can denote only what prevails; and the worse, only what is defeated.

By what standard, then, will the evolutionist measure moral development, and how will he enforce moral obligation? The evolutionist says, "Altruism is later and more complex than egoism: it is therefore morally superior and preferable." A sort of double answer is thus distinguishable. It holds that the more complex in evolution is of greater authority than the less complex, and that the later in evolution has authority over the earlier. The first pretends to determine which of two actions is higher in the moral scale by reference to complexity of structure. It says that as conduct is more varied in act, more heterogeneous in motive, it is higher in the moral scale. Let us take this standard and try to harmonize the competing claims of the individual and the social whole. From the point of view of the individual's perfection, his greatest complexity, and consequently his highest attainment of morality, according to this theory, lies in the development and exercise of every function of which his nature is capable. But from the point of view of social perfection, society's greatest complexity, and consequently highest attainment of morality, lies in

the development and exercise of every function of which it is capable — a condition which can be attained, however, only through specialization of the functions of society's component individual members. That is to say, for the good of the whole, each individual, instead of developing and exercising every function of which he is capable, must restrict himself to that at which he is best, so that time and exertion may be saved, greater skill produced, and society be served more efficiently. Thus the greatest social perfection is inconsistent with the greatest individual perfection.¹

The individual stands before this dilemma: "Shall I be an egoist or an altruist? Ought I to choose the full development and exercise of every faculty of my nature, or ought I to limit and restrict my life that others may be better served by me?" How can he be helped to reach a decision by the principle that moral quality is determined by the degree of complexity of structure? "Complexity of structure" is a purely formal description, and cannot be used as a criterion of moral worth. Egoism and altruism do not mark two different stages in the development of complexity of structure, so that one may be said to be more complex than the other. It would be just as sensible to say that the superior beauty of red over blue is determined by its greater degree of saturation. Both red and blue are capable of infinite degrees of saturation; and no excess in saturation on the part of some particular expression of red can make that color seem

¹ Cf. Sorley, *op. cit.*, pp. 277-279.

the more beautiful of the two to a person who cannot bear that color. Similarly, both egoism and altruism are capable of infinite degrees of complexity of structure; and no excess in complexity of structure of some particular expression of altruism can make altruism morally preferable. "Moral worth" and "complexity of structure" belong to different series, just as "beautiful" and "saturation" belong to different series. Degrees in the one series cannot be expressed in terms of degrees in the other. Differences in moral value cannot be measured by differences in complexity of structure. Egoism and altruism are antagonistic principles that cannot be adjusted. They contain no common units of *moral value*, so that one may be said to contain more of such units than the other, and hence to be morally better. They are mutually exclusive. If the one is taken, the other must be rejected.

In brief, then, it cannot be shown either that altruism is more complex than egoism (some particular expression of altruism may be more complex than some particular expression of egoism, but some other expression of egoism may be more complex than some other expression of altruism), or that "complexity of structure" is essentially the same thing as moral worth.

We see, therefore, that we cannot hold that greater complexity of structure determines superior moral quality. Can we be convinced by the second answer of the evolution theory, and conclude that altruism is a later development in evolution than egoism, and that the later in evolution is to be regarded as of higher moral authority than the earlier?

The evolution theory cannot establish beyond doubt the imagined evolution from egoism to altruism. Action in the early stages of human life appears not to have been completely egoistic, any more than it is completely egoistic at present. From the very first, self-sacrifice seems to have been involved in the preservation of each succeeding generation.¹ As Paulsen says, the individual's impulse for self-maintenance is directed not solely upon the maintenance of his own life, but just as immediately upon the maintenance of the species. In the impulsive nature of man two kinds of motives may be distinguished — selfish affections and social or sympathetic affections. The aim of the first is the private good; the aim of the second is the public good. Both are equal in their origin; both are grounded deep in nature. It is impossible to derive the social impulses from the selfish, and to trace back the impulse towards the good of others to a prior impulse towards self-interest. Even in animal life appears the impulse towards the preservation of the race through procreation and care of young, just as strong as the impulse towards self-preservation.²

Still further with regard to the natural movement from egoism to altruism, the evolution theory does not seem to have shown that action at present is predominantly altruistic. The theory directs our attention to the gradual obliteration of the distinction between the interests of the individual and those of the whole. But the identification of the two interests is mani-

¹ See *supra*, pp. 143-145, and Drummond's "Ascent of Man."

² Cf. Paulsen, "System der Ethik," Bd. I, S. 185-186.

festly incomplete. At most, the theory can make out only that there is a tendency towards the identification of the interests of the individual with those of society. It shows how the individual has become so constituted that much that benefits him individually must of necessity benefit society at large. But the course of human development is far from having reached the point at which actual harmony between each and all is established. The interests and desires of the individual harmonize only roughly with those of his fellows. Indeed, the pleasure or interest of the individual is often the reverse of advantageous to society. Some of the "members of the social organism" disregard almost completely the life of the larger whole whose members they are. And, to a certain extent, every human individual can distinguish, and does distinguish, his own interests from those of society, and often prefers the former.

The constant struggle involved in the course of evolution throws doubt even on the ultimate attainment of a complete harmony of interests and feelings between the individual and the whole. As Sorley says: "The rule has always been that the better-equipped organism asserts and maintains its supremacy only by vanquishing the organisms which are not so well equipped. Conflict and competition have been constant factors in development. . . . Perhaps the necessity for conflict has diminished with the advance of evolution; but it is probable that it would be more correct to say that its forms have changed. At any rate, it is still sufficiently great to make com-

petition one of the chief formative influences in industrial and political life. And the causes from which the struggle of interests arises are so constant — the multiplication of desires and of desiring individuals keeps so well in advance of the means of satisfying desires — that it is doubtful whether the course of evolution is fitted to bring about complete harmony between different individuals. . . . Besides, it does not do to speak as if the only alternative to egoism were a comprehensive altruism. Man is a member of a family, a tribe, a nation, the race. His altruism, therefore, may take the narrow form of family feeling, or it may extend to tribal feeling, or to patriotism, or even rise to devotion to humanity. And these do not merely supplement one another; they are often conflicting principles of conduct. Action for the sake of the family may frequently be most unsocial. . . . Further, when civilization grows complex, the same man is a member of many intersecting societies — a church, a trade, a party organization — and has to balance the claims which each of these has upon him. The suppression of egoism would still leave undetermined the different shares which these various social wholes are to have in a man's sympathies, and their different claims upon his conduct.”¹

Moreover, even if evolutionistic ethics could prove that altruism is a later development than egoism, and that the natural movement of evolution is from egoism to altruism, it would not thereby establish the superior moral quality of altruism. As said before, degeneration is always

¹ Sorley, *op. cit.*, pp. 185–187.

a possibility in a series of changes; and the natural movement from egoism to altruism might be regarded as a movement towards the worse. Furthermore, we do not find that the latest and most highly developed civilizations have fewer evils than the earlier and less highly developed civilizations. On the contrary, as civilization becomes more advanced, the evils become more numerous and more subtle. Many of the greatest evils are possible only in a refined and delicate organization of society. The temptations that to-day swarm thickest around the young man in business and civic life, or around the young woman in social life, are late appearances in the evolutionary process, and yet they are the most dangerous. Qualities of character and action, then, cannot be measured or tested by the length of time taken to evolve.

When the evolutionist ceases to give a formal description of the evolution process in terms of complexity and sequence, he sometimes attempts to project its end. When proceeding in this teleological manner, he declares that the end of evolution is life—increase and development of life. “Evolution becomes the highest possible when the conduct simultaneously achieves the greatest totality of life in self, in offspring, and in fellow-men.”¹ Life is declared to have a value that makes its pursuit and promotion a reasonable moral aim and obligation. But what can the evolutionist mean by “life” when he speaks of its “greatest totality” in a way that implies that it admits of quantitative measurement, and

¹ Spencer, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–26.

when he says that its increase and development is the moral aim? The evolution theory can furnish no criterion by which to judge or measure the various and conflicting manifestations of life. It can admit no other grading or scale of values of the different parts of life than the results produced by the natural law of evolution; and this law can only show how one part or element has become *stronger* or *more persistent* than other parts or elements.

When we inquire more particularly concerning the evolutionist's moral "obligation" to promote the increase and development of life, his embarrassment becomes even greater. He attempts to announce a scale of moral values. The "life" which human conduct "ought" to increase is said to be not merely that of the individual agent, but that of the whole community — "self, offspring, and fellow-men." But when we ask "Why?" — when we demand the reason or ground of this "obligation" to seek the welfare of all, the evolutionist's theory can only try to show how the growth of the individual has been so dependent upon that of the whole body of society that it is impossible to separate their interests. But obviously, no complete identification has yet been brought about; and evolutionistic ethics is not able to harmonize or adjust their competing claims. How are the conflicting impulses of egoism and altruism to be adjusted? In human life there are self-seeking impulses and there are impulses to seek the good of others. Which set is morally better? The evolution theory can admit no other hierarchy of motives

than that produced by the natural law of evolution; and this law can only show how certain impulses have become strong and persistent. We, for our part, maintain that the selfish feelings share this characteristic of strength and persistency. Selfish conduct has been as necessary for the preservation and development of man as altruistic conduct. It is by the action of both of these that men as they are at present constituted have been produced. And we maintain, still further, that the question of persistency leaves untouched the fundamental question of moral superiority. Even if altruism could be shown to have become stronger and more persistent in the race, it would not thereby be shown to be morally superior to egoism. To obtain a criterion for moral quality we need something that will enable us to distinguish among persistent tendencies those that are moral and those that are not moral. The "most persistent impulses of human nature" are only the survival or remnant of past stages in the course of development. The achieved results of inheritance contain traces of the evil as well as of the good in ancestral conduct; and what we want is some criterion for distinguishing among these various tendencies the good from the evil. The evolution theory does not afford us such a criterion. It does not afford a moral scale of the persistent impulses. The length to which it can go is only to the discovery of what tendencies in human nature are strongest and most persistent. And in proceeding thus, the distinction between right and wrong, good and evil, comes to be only the distinction between success and failure

in the struggle for existence: the good is simply what has come to prevail; the evil is simply what has been defeated. But morality cannot be identified with persistence; and the moral grade of an impulse cannot be determined by its strength for survival. The theory of evolution is unable to yield a principle for distinguishing between good and evil, right and wrong, in conduct.

A striking inconsistency may be detected in the "obligation" announced by evolutionistic ethics. This theory tells us that life, the increase and development of life, is the end of evolution; and that we are under moral obligation to promote this end. But if the increase and development of life be the goal of evolution without regard to our individual volition of altruism, why is our volition necessary or obligatory? If this is really the aim of evolution, the making it our aim can neither help nor hinder its realization. On the other hand, if our volition is necessary for the attainment of evolution's goal, how can the evolutionist declare that the triumph of altruism, the increase and development of life, is the final term of evolution? There is an inconsistency between this theory's announcement of a definite and certain end of evolution and its moral appeal to men to bring about the realization of that end.

Another weakness may be discovered when we consider the sanction that evolutionistic ethics employs to enforce upon the individual a due observance of his obligation. When the individual inquires, "Why should I sacrifice my good

for the good of others?" this theory replies, "Because doing this is a condition of your survival — evolution has brought it about that only the altruistic can survive." This is a doubly unsatisfactory answer. In the first place, experience does not show us that every wicked individual is soon cut off from the earth; on the contrary, experience shows us many wicked individuals flourishing "as the green bay tree." In the second place, this answer does not offer a rational ground of obligation. Instead of saying that a man *ought* to be altruistic, it says that he must be altruistic, or perish as the result of natural selection. But this offers one only a "Hobson's choice," and amounts to saying, "Sacrifice yourself, or be sacrificed." Where is there any room here for true altruism, an intelligent and free preference of others' interests to one's own?

The evolutionary account of altruism is good as an *explanation* of how some men, or perhaps most men, have come to be altruistic, but it does not offer a *rational ground of obligation*. It cannot furnish a satisfactory answer to our question, Why ought an egoist to renounce egoism and become an altruist? For instance, I may say to you: "I am an egoist. I prefer my own good to the good of others. The cosmic process of which you speak has not made me an altruist." What will you say to me? You may tell me that I am a cosmic failure. I may let the epithet pass, with the side remark that it was your "cosmos" that failed in its work. I am what I am, an egoist. And I insist that you cannot convince me with reasons that I *ought* to sacrifice my good for the

good of others. You may tell me that an egoist is an anomaly: I reply, Very well; then I am an anomaly, and through no fault of my own. I will follow my anomalous nature. You may tell me that egoism is battling against the invincible forces of the universe: I reply, I think that I have a good many fellow-combatants; and we have carried on, and can still carry on, a quite respectable skirmish. You tell me that the sure end of egoism is destruction — it cannot survive in the struggle for existence: I reply, It seems to me that altruism goes to destruction much more surely and quickly than egoism. It does not change the character of the loss that the altruist sacrifices himself early and voluntarily to the consuming forces. The egoist, however, battles courageously to save himself to the very end; and since he may never confess his defeat, he may be said never to capitulate to the enemy. You say that you and nearly all men are altruistic, and that this is in accordance with the order of nature and evolution: I reply, Then I believe that nature and evolution are going wrong; but I do not care where they are going. I believe that every one should look out for himself. That is my nature; and that is what I will. Finally, you say, Well, you are different from me. You prefer your own good to that of others; I prefer others' good to my own. You are an egoist; I am an altruist. Do as you will. Go your way, and I will go mine. I reply, I agree entirely. We are different. My nature is different from yours; and of course I prefer mine to yours; and that is the end of the matter. You cannot

convince me that I ought to prefer your nature to mine.

Strictly speaking, the theory of evolution is simply an account of a sequence of facts or processes. It is purely historical. This historical account might be ever so perfect, yet it would be wholly unable to yield a standard of right conduct, or to ground a moral obligation for the individual. And this is the fundamental problem of ethics. This is a question of moral value. It is not a matter of history at all. The evolutionistic account of history throws light on such problems as the growth or development of moral feelings and ideas, and the social customs and institutions in which these have expressed themselves. But to show the process through which men's moral feelings and ideas have passed, and to trace the course of society's customs and institutions, is not to end the search for a criterion of moral worth — a criterion by which we can tell whether these developments have been a moral improvement or deterioration. To describe the way men have acted in the past is a very different matter from saying how they *ought* to have acted, or how they ought to act in the future. To give an account of how the altruistic tendencies in men have come about is different from proving that altruistic conduct ought to be preferred to egoistic conduct. On the one hand, there are the facts of altruism in human conduct, the feelings and impulses from which altruism springs, the customs and institutions to which it gives rise, and the sentiments and ideals by which it is accompanied. All these are matters of his-

tory, and are in the province of evolutionistic ethics. On the other hand, there is the question of the moral value of altruism: is it morally superior to egoism? Ought men to make it the dominant principle of their conduct? This inquiry does not lie in the province of evolutionistic ethics. It is not a matter of history. No amount of historical investigation into how men have acted in the past can contribute one iota towards its solution. When we ask for the ground of the obligation to be altruistic, we are not asking for an account of the historical process in which men's moral feelings and ideas and customs have assumed their present form. It is an irrelevant answer to our question, "Why is altruism morally obligatory?" when we are told that natural selection has led to the present status of men and society. We question the validity of certain moral judgments, and we are told how these judgments arose. But an account of how they arose does not enlighten us as to whether they are right or wrong. An account of how certain conduct has come to pass cannot do service for an answer to the inquiry, "Is such conduct morally obligatory?" A description of the facts and laws of ethical development, however complete, can never yield a moral obligation. However fully a man understood the course of the development of altruism in the human race, he might be without a conviction of the obligation to be altruistic in his conduct. However clearly he saw how altruism had become dominant for many, or most, other individuals, he might still see no reason why he ought to make it dominant for him.

And the evolutionist is unable to prove to him that he ought to adopt as the maxim of his actions the principle of unselfishness.

Before concluding, it should be reiterated that these criticisms have reference to evolutionistic ethics only inasmuch as it attempts to be *regulative*. Its descriptive or historical branch has probably made a larger contribution to ethical science than all other schools together. Of evolutionistic ethics as a "science" the writer professes himself an eager and reverent disciple, as will clearly appear later. His aim here has been simply to show that evolutionistic ethics should not claim to be able to ground obligation. It should confine its attention to efficient causes, and should ignore final causes. It should not change its point of view from history to validity. It should not prescribe duties, but should describe facts. It should be, not "normative," but "descriptive," not "speculative," but "scientific."

Evolutionistic ethics, then, is incapable of grounding obligation. It may be, however, that it is no worse off in this regard than any other ethics. It may be that no ethics is capable of grounding obligation. Perhaps it is impossible to *reason* men into being egoistic or altruistic. Altruism and egoism may be phenomena of the will; and the fundamental direction of the will may be the final fact. This is a question for the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX

REASON AND WILL

THE preceding discussion of the various attempts to ground obligation has brought us now to the crucial point of the whole subject — the relation between reason and will in the matter of furnishing the fundamental principles of conduct.

The first aspect of this subject which we shall consider is Fouillée's proposed "completion" of the evolutionistic ethics. Fouillée says that he accepts fully the evolutionistic ethics, and carries it farther. He regards his doctrine of *idées-forces* as the necessary complement of the evolutionist's doctrine of natural forces. We must, therefore, consider the bearing on obligation of his doctrine. A summary of his doctrine of *idées-forces* in its application to man's moral life may be given as follows: —

The great ideas which direct our thought and will are real forces, by the very desire which they envelop and translate, as well as by the motor tension which is the physiological counterpart of the desire. Ideas do not so much correspond to things ready-made and transcendental as to things which are making and to an immanent becoming, of which they enclose both the intellectual formula and the sense-motive.¹

Moral altruism originates in intellectual altruism, in intellectual disinterestedness, which permits us to

¹ Cf. Fouillée, "Critique des systèmes de morale contemporains," pp. viii-ix.

think of others, and to place ourselves in them in thought. The consciousness of self is thus open to others; and this is the true principle of the universal society. We accept all the realism of the naturalists, positivists, and evolutionists; and at the same time the idealism of the other schools, but without accepting the metaphysical dogmatism of the latter. Without affirming as certain an imperative that is categorical and transcendent, we complete the concrete motives and springs to action of naturalism by adding to them all that a moral idealist really needs — an immanent principle which is able on the one hand rationally to limit egoism, and on the other hand rationally to motive altruism.¹

We believe that it is possible to found a philosophy upon the practical force of ideas, a force real and tending to realization. Descartes said: "I think; therefore I exist. I think God; therefore God exists. I think the other objects; therefore they exist. Or, in a word, I have ideas; therefore the objects already exist." But we may also say: "I think; therefore I am becoming. I think an ideal goodness and an universal society; therefore this ideal goodness and society are becoming. Or, in a word, I have ideas; therefore I have the commencement of the objects, and the first means of their progressive realization." The perfected self, the perfected good, the perfected society — these are for us ideas, the realization of which lies before us, the conception of which is a present force towards their realization. The moral ideal is not a pure chimera if I succeed in giving it an existence, first in my thought, and then in my actions, which are only my thought continued across my organs and propagating itself in the exterior world. Human thought may become, even in the bosom of determinism, the creator of a new world.²

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. x-xi.

² Cf. *ibid.*, p. xiv.

The idea of justice, the idea of respect for law, the ideas of love of country and love of humanity, constitute the very greatest forces at work among men. In the very conception of disinterestedness there is started an attraction towards it, an attraction which is wholly intellectual.¹

Every idea is a tendency and indivisibly an action. There is no idea which does not produce a cerebral movement and does not tend to express itself in our members, in our external motions, in our conduct. Sometimes the representation of the object is sufficiently intense to impress upon our body a movement that is visible; sometimes it is weakened and hindered in its development and does not then produce a movement that is perceptible. At bottom, an idea is only an action begun, reflected upon itself by the obstacle which it encounters in the other ideas which tend like itself to existence, and thus conscious of itself. The idea of a sound, for example, is a sound born in the brain and transmitting itself to the larynx, where the muscles dilate and contract according to the degree of acuteness of the sound-idea. Likewise, the moral ideal, an idea wholly rational and in this sense free, has in itself a spontaneous force of realization. The idea of morality is morality begun. This idea is the prime mover of moral evolution, and from the moment that man has conceived it, he is no longer in pure egoism where he was before. The self that dreams of becoming disinterested and loving is no longer a hateful ego. The thought of disinterestedness never remains entirely sterile; it translates itself into acts.²

With an intelligent being like man, whenever action is not blind and instinctive, it is determined by the knowledge which he possesses. Knowledge and its

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 15, 21.

² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

truths must not be considered as pure abstractions, having need of some external and auxiliary force for their realization. They realize themselves finally in the measure of their verity. Knowledge and its laws manifest themselves in our intelligence and in our actions. Our legs and arms are moved by our brains; our brains are moved by our conceptions. From certain conceptions there result certain movements or actions. From such and such knowledge there results such and such practice or conduct. Our thoughts continue themselves in our acts. Practice is only theory in action. And if the theory is exact, or squares with facts, then practice will do the same.¹

In all those actions which are reducible to the application of such and such scientific knowledge, we never have the least need of supposing a will distinct from the intelligence, like a servant ready to execute the orders of its master. Here the order executes itself. Man thinks, he feels, and the act follows. The true condition may be represented as the activity and struggle of ideas. Our bodies are only the medium across which knowledge realizes itself according to the laws of its own necessity.²

An idea must not be regarded as a logical abstract form. Even if it be reduced to the office of directing another force, it must still be considered a force, just as dikes, or banks of a river, are forces. An idea, as we regard it, is an idea of something — in morality, of an action — and is already the beginning of its realization. An idea is thus an action on the way towards realizing itself; it is a force in action; it is a tendency that unfolds itself; or, in psychological language, it is an exercise of the will. To think is therefore to act, to will, to move. In morality, the thought of an ideal is already the will of the ideal. The intelligence is active

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 22.

² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 23.

in itself and by itself. Reason is an executive power, and not, as ordinarily regarded, merely deliberative. It is not passively seated like a judge; it takes an active part in the struggle. It is not a spectator at a play; it is an actor that acts and at the same time sees itself act.¹

The intelligence is not purely contemplative, in practical questions, except when there is a balance between several ideas, and a consequent actual ignorance of what is best to do. This apparent absence of determining force is only the provisional equilibrium of opposed forces. In fact every idea tends to realize itself, and would realize itself effectively if it were alone.²

When the idea has once been produced by the facts, it becomes a motive power capable of reacting upon them. Once engendered, the idea in its turn engenders a belief in the possibility of its own realization. This belief produces a sentiment like that which the artist experiences for a work of art which he represents to himself as a possibility. This sentiment produces an inclination, similar to the need of creation which the artist experiences. And the inclination finally excites the means of its effectual realization, it sets in motion the act. The idea has thus become a reality. The objective and external fact produced the subjective and internal fact, the idea; but this in turn reproduces the external fact, transforms it, perfects it, and adapts it to itself.³

In man, a thinking being, the ideal becomes one of the "conditions of existence." Man adapts his conduct not only to the physical and social environment, but also to that supreme and ideal environment of intelligence or reason, the internal conditions of existence and development. An ideal of the maximum

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

² *Ibid.*, p. 289.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

of power for activity, an ideal of the maximum of consciousness and knowledge for intelligence, an ideal of the maximum of enjoyment for the sensibility: this is the real environment of man, with which he must be in equilibrium or adaptation. The human individual has a certain ideal to which he must adapt himself in order to realize in its fullness his fitting existence. He conceives an ideal of force or activity, knowledge or enjoyment, which is only his nature arrived at the end of its evolution. This conception realizes itself little by little, and thus produces action in accordance with an internal finality.¹

Instinct and knowledge are the two great factors of moral evolution. Naturalism has insisted principally upon the first. Moral idealism must insist also upon the force of ideas, and must show in knowledge itself a force which tends to dominate the world. These views complement each other. They are equally necessary to a positive science of morality, which takes account of all the facts, including those important facts called human ideas.²

The appearance of reflective thought and of moral will marks, in the history of the world, the critical moment when the world becomes conscious of what it ought to be, and begins thereby its own transformation; for the idea of the better is already a preliminary realization of the better, and the force or power of that idea is the means of a more complete realization.³

The conception of an ideal is not abstract, inert, dead. It exerts a real force, a liberating influence, upon the person conceiving it, and in the environment in which he lives. The pure ideal would be that the universal totality of beings became a society, conscious, united, happy. Morality makes us will this ideal in preference to everything else, and makes us begin its realiza-

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 358.

tion in human society. The conception of such a state is itself a force towards its attainment. It tends to make real externally the condition which it has discerned internally. It becomes a progressive force towards the accomplishment of the ideal.¹

The solution proposed in Fouillée's doctrine of *idées-forces* seems at first glance plausible enough; but reflection shows it to be unsatisfactory. It reverses the true order of occurrences when it says that we first conceive others as similar to ourselves, or as equally sensitive, and then sympathize with them; that we first set ourselves in their places and enter into their experiences in thought, before we experience sympathy with them. Sympathy of the sensibilities precedes the movement of thought. It is the germ from which the extension of consciousness begins. We feel with others first, then comprehend and understand them later. The sensibilities and emotions take us beyond the boundaries of self long before thought accomplishes the feat.

It is, further, a confusion to speak of the intellect as a dynamic agency, a motor principle, or a force in any sense of the word. From our ideas feelings arise and inspire action. A telegram announcing danger to mother, wife, or child stirs our feelings, and occasions prompt action according to the circumstances. But the processes in the evolution of these *ideo-motor* actions should

¹ Cf. *ibid*, pp. 406-407.

In addition to the work cited, see "La Morale des Idées-forces," "La Psychologie des Idées-forces," and "L'Évolutionisme des Idées-forces." For an application of his theory to the problem of free-will, see "La Liberté et le Déterminisme."

not be obscured by the vague expression "*idée-force*." Feelings arise from the idea in the mind, but the idea is not feeling. Volitions are consequent upon the arousal of these feelings by the idea; but the idea is not volition or "an exercise of will." Actions take place as the completion of the process; but the idea is not "an action begun." A ship is not propelled by its rudder; and to speak of *rudder-force* as accounting for the ship's progress through the water would be recognized as absurd. In an analogous manner, reason and will are generically distinct, and should not be jumbled together, as they are in the expression "*idée-force*."

Moreover, we frequently conceive an idea which we negate wholly and violently. The conception of certain acts, instead of being accompanied by an attraction towards them, is accompanied by a violent repulsion and shrinking from them. The thought fills us with horror. The act presented in idea is vigorously rejected. It is considered as not agreeing with our wishes, desires, wills. An ideal is not purely intellectual. It is a product of the whole character, especially the will. An accepted ideal is a force; but an ideal is not the same thing as a thought or idea. It is a thought carried to a farther stage of development. The thought must be recognized and affirmed by the will as valid and binding. If I obey the idea, it is because I believe it *good*, and because I love and will the *good* which the idea represents. It is the will that ascribes or denies value to the idea, and that commences, or refuses to commence, its realization. When one

sacrifices himself for some "grand idea" like justice, the nation, humanity, it is his will that is the cause. His will loves the idea, and affirms it to be "grand" and worth realizing. The will of another person may scorn the idea and affirm it to be silly and foolish. Fouillée does not take account of the fact that the immoral person, the cynic, and the scoffer "entertain the ideas of morality," but entertain them only to mock at them, to spit on them, and to trample them under foot. He does not seem to have asked which is the more fundamental, the intellect or the will. But he nearly always speaks of the idea of disinterestedness as exciting our love. In this he recognizes the fact that the activity of the will is necessary before the idea can pass into act. The idea is not a finality. The action of the will is necessary, and constitutes the final authority.

The theoretical is not first and the practical second. The theoretical is called into being by the demands of the practical. It is a means to the attainment of the practical end. Its purpose is to lead to success. It exists on account of its value in enabling its possessor to attain his ends. It could not have come into existence unless it had been thus advantageous. No matter how exalted we regard intelligence and reason, they had this simple and humble origin — they were called into existence and developed according to the general laws of organic evolution.

Fouillée and many other writers on ethics hold that there is nothing in man that can be truly disinterested except the reason. They then pass from this statement to the statement that it is

the reason that leads to disinterested action. But this is a confusion. The reason is disinterested; but this does not mean that it dictates to the will disinterestedness in action; on the contrary, it means simply that the intellect receives from the will its interests. The will is interested; and the intellect assists in carrying out the interests of the will. It discovers how the will can accomplish its realization, attain its ends. The reason cannot pronounce either in favor of or against interests. It receives from the will the first principle, or standard of measure, from which it starts. The will determines whether self-interest or the interest of others is preferred. No man ever sacrificed self as the result of a conclusion due wholly to reason. Self-sacrifice, altruism, martyrdom, do not take place as the result of processes of ratiocination. They are achievements of will. Such a will is the product, not of intellectual reflection, but of nature. It is a development according to natural evolution. It is one man's "nature" to be selfish; another man's "nature" to be unselfish. Whether *my* nature is included in a *larger* nature as an integral part of it, is a matter of speculation, having power over those who *believe* it (a phenomenon of will), but having no power over those who do not believe it. And it is an error to say that such a speculation *ought* to have power over those who do not believe it; for their wills do not respond to and affirm such a speculation as an ideal by which to regulate their conduct. Such is not their nature, and that is the end of the matter. Right for the individual is that which fulfills his

nature. The duty of acting contrary to one's nature cannot be demonstrated to any one. The duty to love others cannot be proved to one who does not love others. Goodness is not the product of the intellect. It is the fruit of the "good will," which is a natural product, developed in a way which we name "natural evolution." A "good" will or a "bad" will is as wholly a *natural* and necessary phenomenon as the nature and development of an animal or plant.

The will is the primary force; the intellect is a secondary force. I will to help this needy person whom I see; my intellect shows me the way to accomplish my will. Observe, I do not say "I will to do right." "The right" is an empty intellectual abstraction. Bradley argues¹ that virtue can be an end in itself. He maintains that we can pursue virtue for virtue's sake, as truly as we can seek any other end for itself. This position seems to me a confusion. It appears to lose sight of the fact that virtue is only an abstract term to denote a relation between concrete objects, and that a relation derives a moral quality of goodness only by the effects of the relationship upon the objects. What relation is meant by the term? What is virtue? Is it the extreme self-abnegation and self-renunciation preached by Tolstoi? Or is it the extreme self-assertion and self-exaltation preached by Nietzsche? The pursuit of virtue for virtue's sake is inane sentimentality. It would be shameful to say Leander loved not Hero, but his own loving; Damon loved not Pythias, but his own friendship;

¹ "Ethical Studies," Essay II, "Why should I be Moral?"

Leonidas loved not Sparta, but his own heroism; Arnold Toynbee loved not the poor, George Peabody loved not the ignorant, and Stephen Girard loved not the orphaned, but each his own philanthropy. Would not this doctrine carry one even to the impiety that Jesus loved not men, but his own sacrifice? The "Hedonistic Paradox" says that pleasure to be got must be forgot. Much more, then, virtue to be attained must be lost sight of. The virtuous man thinks not about his virtue. He clothes the naked, feeds the hungry, and visits the sick without being aware of his virtue. He seeks the good of others, in entire forgetfulness of self. They who seek virtue for virtue's sake may become like the self-righteous Pharisee who thanked God that he was not like other men, but had fulfilled what the law of virtue required; and they will merit the same condemnation.

"I will to do right" is an abstract generalization, which has no meaning if "right" is interpreted as an intellectual canon, in opposition to the natural will, and superior to that will. "I will to do right" can have meaning only if it mean simply that I will that my every single action shall agree with my ideal, that is, with the fundamental direction of my will. There is no such thing as an intellectual morality — conduct caused wholly by principles laid down by the intellect. Some writers say that the intellect imposes its findings concerning the "ultimate end of conduct" upon the will as its law. But this is a misstatement. The intellect does not command the will concerning ends, but advises it

concerning means. It says to the will, You can accomplish your end better in such and such a way than in some other. Moral laws are not commands imposed upon the will, but are expressions of how the will can best accomplish itself. Man does not exist for the sake of the moral laws; but the moral laws exist for the sake of man, to whom they minister.

Intelligence is accessory to will, and is without moral significance, except as it enables the will better to accomplish itself. The more I know, the better able am I to carry out my will. Is the will "obligated" to become rational? No; will as we know it in human beings does generally strive to become enlightened. And we speak of the intelligent and rational wills of men. The will accomplishes itself better when rational, and hence tries to be so. But it is an error to say that the will *ought* to be rational, or ought to be more rational than it is. It is rational if this is possible, and is as rational as it can be.

Morality and immorality are volitional phenomena. Conduct is caused by will. The direction of the will is the fundamental fact, and constitutes the aim or end of conduct, which becomes for the intellect the standard of measure. The intellect merely assists in carrying out the dictates of the will.

The line of thought here is very similar to that expressed by Paulsen in the introductory chapter of his "System of Ethics." He says that the decision about the nature of the greatest good is not the affair of the intellect, but of the will. Before the individual there floats an idea of the fashion-

ing of his life, that is, an ideal, whose realization he feels to be his true task and at the same time the highest aim of his desire and endeavor. It is not his intellect out of which this ideal originates. Its excellence cannot really be proved to his understanding. It is nothing else than the mirroring in idea of the innermost being and will of the individual. If other individuals have different ideals, he cannot prove to them, either through logical demonstration or through empirical investigation, the incorrectness of their idea of a perfect life. Perhaps he can, by simply showing and describing his ideal, lead them to feel its worth, and possibly its greater worth, and so win them over for it; but what then decides for it is not their intellect or understanding, but their will. The understanding as such knows nothing at all about values; it discriminates true and untrue, real and unreal, but not good and bad.¹

To this position one might object, in the thought of Fouillée, "But when the intellect has decided concerning true and untrue, real and unreal, these ideas become active forces, and may bring about changes in the will." To this objection we may reply, "True and untrue, real and unreal," are not categories for phenomena of the will. There can be no such thing as a false or unreal ideal. An ideal is "good" or "bad"; and the decision concerning whether it is "good" or "bad" is not the affair of the intellect, but of the individual will. Your will may pronounce a particular ideal "good," while my will pronounces it "bad." An ideal represents or expresses the

¹ Cf. Paulsen, *op. cit.*, Bd. I, S. 11.

fundamental direction of the will, and is the ultimate fact for that nature. It cannot be measured by some ulterior standard with reference to its "truth" or "reality." The direction of the will, or its expressed ideal, furnishes the ultimate criterion by which the intellect tries courses of action to see whether they are in agreement with that standard. When once the view about the greatest good is fixed, then from this point it is possible to prove to the understanding that certain conduct promotes or hinders its realization. But the determination of the greatest good itself is not effected by logical or intellectual procedure. The final decision about what constitutes a good life is made by the will; it is an estimation of value in which the deepest essence of the individual nature comes to expression. The worth of a particular life-ideal cannot be demonstrated or proved to an individual's will by argument, any more than the sweet or bitter taste of a fruit can be proved to his tongue by argument.

This doctrine receives very valuable support in the work of Westermarck. Both in the Introduction and in the Conclusion of his treatise on the "Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas," he says that the whole of his investigation goes to establish the fact that man's moral ideas have their origin in man's moral emotions (phenomena of will, as opposed to reason). A condensation of Westermarck's doctrine may be given as follows: —

That the moral concepts are ultimately based on emotions either of indignation or approval, is a fact which a certain school of thinkers have in vain at-

tempted to deny. Men pronounce certain acts to be good or bad on account of the emotions those acts arouse in their minds, just as they call sunshine warm and ice cold on account of certain sensations which they experience, and as they name a thing pleasant or painful because they feel pleasure or pain.¹

Whilst the import of the predicate of a moral judgment may thus in every case be traced back to an emotion in him who pronounces the judgment, it is generally assumed to possess the character of universality or "objectivity" as well. We are not willing to admit that our moral convictions are a mere matter of taste. Yet our tendency to objectivize the moral judgments is no sufficient ground for referring them to the province of reason. If, in this respect, there is a difference between these judgments and others that are rooted in the subjective sphere of experience, it is, largely, a difference in degree rather than in kind. The æsthetic judgments, which indisputably have an emotional origin, also lay claim to a certain amount of "objectivity."²

Morality may in a much higher degree than, for instance, beauty be a subject of instruction and of profitable discussion, in which persuasion is carried by the representation of existing data. But although in this way many differences may be accorded, there are points in which unanimity cannot be reached even by the most accurate presentation of facts or the subtlest process of reasoning. Whilst certain phenomena will almost of necessity arouse similar moral emotions in every mind which perceives them clearly, there are others with which the case is different. The emotional constitution of man does not present the same uniformity as the human intellect. No intellectual enlighten-

¹ Cf. Westermarck, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 4.

² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 6-8.

ment, no scrutiny of facts, can decide how far a person is bound, or allowed, to promote the welfare of his nation, or his own welfare, at the cost of that of other nations or other individuals. Professor Sidgwick's well-known moral axiom, "I ought not to prefer my own lesser good to the greater good of another," would, if explained to a Fuegian or a Hottentot, be regarded by him, not as self-evident, but as simply absurd; nor can it claim general acceptance even among ourselves. Who is that "Another" to whose greater good I ought not to prefer my own lesser good? A fellow-countryman, a savage, a criminal, a bird, a fish — all without distinction? ¹

The error we commit by attributing objectivity to moral estimates becomes particularly conspicuous when we consider that these estimates have not only a certain quality, but a certain quantity. There are different degrees of badness and goodness, a duty may be more or less stringent, a merit may be smaller or greater. These quantitative differences are due to the emotional origin of all moral concepts. Emotions vary in intensity almost indefinitely, and the moral emotions form no exception to this rule. Indeed, it may be fairly doubted whether the same mode of conduct ever arouses exactly the same degree of indignation or approval in any two individuals.²

The presumed objectivity of moral judgments thus being a chimera, there can be no moral truth in the sense in which this term is generally understood. The ultimate reason for this is, that the moral concepts are based upon emotions, and that the contents of an emotion fall entirely outside the category of truth.³

If there are no general moral truths, the object of scientific ethics cannot be to fix rules for human conduct, the aim of all science being the discovery of some

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

truth. It has been said by Bentham and others that moral principles cannot be proved because they are first principles which are used to prove everything else. But the real reason for their being inaccessible to demonstration is that, owing to their very nature, they can never be true. If the word "Ethics," then, is to be used as the name for a science, the object of that science can only be to study the moral consciousness as a fact.¹

Our moral consciousness belongs to our mental constitution, which we cannot change as we please. We approve and we disapprove because we cannot do otherwise. Can we help feeling pain when the fire burns us? Can we help sympathizing with our friends? Are these phenomena less necessary, less powerful in their consequences, because they fall within the subjective sphere of experience? So, too, why should the moral law command less obedience because it forms part of our own nature? Far from being a danger, ethical subjectivism seems to me more likely to be an acquisition for moral practice. Could it be brought home to people that there is no absolute standard in morality, they would perhaps be somewhat more tolerant in their judgments, and more apt to listen to the voice of reason. If the right has an objective existence, the moral consciousness has certainly been playing at blind-man's-buff ever since it was born, and will continue to do so until the extinction of the human race. But who does admit this? Far above the vulgar idea that the right is a settled something to which everybody has to adjust his opinions, rises the conviction that it has its existence in each individual mind, capable of any expansion, proclaiming its own right to exist, if needs be, venturing to make a stand against the whole world. Such a conviction makes for progress.²

¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 18.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

It is the business of moral science to discover and to formulate the laws of human behavior, to trace out the connection between acts and their effects upon human life. Looking towards the past, these laws have the form, "Such and such conduct had such and such effects." Looking towards the future, these laws have the form, "Such and such conduct will have such and such effects," or "To obtain such and such effects, such and such conduct is necessary." This last is a different statement of the so-called imperative "Thou shalt." Every imperative is hypothetical, and rests upon an implied condition ("If you will do so and so — attain pleasure, maintain the excellence of human nature, benefit mankind, etc. — you ought to act thus and thus"). The intellectualists in ethics would say here with impatience, "But you ought to act in certain ways without any consideration of your will; your will is subject to duty; you ought to will so and so." To them we should reply, Choose one of two things: either make the *ought* unconditional and absolute, and thus imply that obligation cannot be rationally justified; or else make the *ought* conditioned upon something represented as good. In this latter case, the good is either absolute or relative. But the good is dependent upon the nature of a particular person at a particular time and under particular circumstances, and hence cannot be absolute, but is always relative. In other words, the good is a datum of experience, and dependent upon the nature of the person and his world. If the person under consideration is a "pervert" or a "degenerate," or if it is his

nature not to value very highly "the excellence of human nature" or "the well-being of society"; if he does not feel and judge himself one with the rest of humanity; if he suffers not when others suffer, and is not glad when others are glad; if he finds not his good in the good of others; or if he is in any way different from you,—you may have difficulty in convincing him of his obligation to seek "the good" which you seek, and to act as seems good and right to you. The individual's own conception of good and right is the starting point; his own reasoning from his own will and experience is the basis of his obligation. If his nature and acts are different from yours, or from society's, you may protect yourself. You may educate him to your way of thinking and acting. If he is not educable, but is harmless, however, you may place him in an institution for feeble-minded, idiots, or insane. If he is dangerous, you may imprison him. If he is hopelessly uneducable and is also mortally harmful, you may execute him. You may do these things, and be thankful that such people are so few. But nevertheless, you cannot make out that a moral imperative is binding upon him without any reference to his nature or will; that is, that there is a moral imperative superior to the facts of his nature. You cannot impose upon him an obligation to be any different from what he is. What he is, is the ultimate fact. And it is the business of ethical science to discover what this fact is in each case. The particular nature of the particular individual at a particular time and under particular circumstances is the fact from which moral science must start.

A universally valid determination of the highest good is not possible in the sense that it can be demonstrated to everybody. It is possible only to the extent that the wills of all the individuals agree in their fundamental direction. This is in a measure true, in view of the far-reaching similarity of capacities and conditions. A certain correspondence in aim of the various wills may be assumed in the human species. To ascertain this is the affair of moral science, analogous to a natural history investigation. A science of morals seeks general formulas to describe what men actually pursue as their greatest good or as the perfect life. The task of the moral scientist is no different from that of the biologist: he does not have to prescribe life's aim, but to discover it. When he discovers this, he has to characterize those individuals who have a different life-aim or a differently directed will as "abnormalities."¹ But these moral "abnormalities" are not to be regarded as moral "reprobates." They are no more moral reprobates than are persons who had the misfortune to be born deaf, dumb, or blind.

Thus the "ought" is made to rest upon the "is." Human conduct is subject to natural laws; and the discovery and formulation of these laws is the business of moral science, so that man may know how to shape his conduct to attain his ends. A moral law is not a prescription that must be obeyed regardless of what effects are willed and what means are best adapted to their attainment.

The chief source of error in a good many ethical inquiries is this: they undertake an investigation

¹ Cf. Paulsen, *op. cit.*, Bd. I, S. 12.

centring round the question, "What ought the individual to will? Ought he to will his own special good? Ought he to will the general social good? Ought he to will the universal good? What is the correct definition of each of these goods?" Now the whole foundation of such investigations is wrong. The fundamental question is not, What ought the individual to will? but is this, What does the individual will? As a matter of fact, as a matter of empirical proof, what does the individual will? After this is discovered there comes the empirical question, How can he attain what he wills? The will of the individual does not lie dormant and inactive until after some ethical theorist has settled the question *a priori*, What ought to be the direction of the will? Humanity does not wait until moral science becomes perfect before practising the social virtues. The direction of the will is not dependent upon speculations concerning "duty," "the proper end of human personal endeavor," "the universal or absolute good." No; the will is primary. Its direction is the fundamental part of each individual's nature. And it cannot be other than it is.

There are two kinds of treatises on morality. The one is *scientific*; the other is *metaphysical*. The first, with reference to the past, studies the facts of the conduct of men, and attempts to discover uniformities of action and will, causes and effects, chains of sequence, "natural laws"; and with reference to the future, it attempts to codify the ways and means of accomplishing the wills given as facts. The second, with reference to the past, despises "facts" — it "thinks";

and with reference to the future, it attempts to prescribe or command certain conduct for the will. The first studies facts to find out what the wills of men actually are, and whether any general agreement in aim may be discovered; and it then studies facts to find out how these wills may be accomplished. The second does not care what the wills actually are; it prescribes what they *ought* to be. It does not proceed simply from a reality of experience, but from an idea conceived as superior to experience, an idea to which nothing as yet real corresponds, but which ought to be realized for itself and not as a means for something else. In a word, instead of a duty derived and simply logical, as when one says, "To cure yourself of fever you ought to take quinine," this procedure champions a duty that is primitive and absolute, imposing itself upon the will by itself, and not in virtue of an anterior fact of will of which it would be the consequence. According to the first, however, the fundamental principle of moral science, the fixed point accepted as the starting point, is represented as a fact given in experience. For instance, if the will or desire of happiness is given as the fundamental fact, then moral science discovers the conditions of its attainment, and thus obtains a science of happiness. It does not begin by saying that happiness *ought* to be desired; it says that it *is* desired; just as in another case it may say that wealth or poverty, power or abasement, life or death is desired. Moral science is shy about saying, "Everybody desires happiness, and nothing but happiness." Such a complete induction has hardly been made. Emphatically,

however, moral science does not say that anything *ought* to be willed. What *is* willed is accepted as the starting point. The business of moral science is to discover what is actually willed. To moral science it seems foolish to try to establish prescriptions about what *ought* to be willed. Only that can be willed which is willed. The chief desire or will being given as a fundamental fact or basal principle, the means of satisfying it becomes desirable, and the idea of "obligation" becomes introduced into the science of morals, without expressing anything more than what it expresses in all the other sciences, namely, the necessity of the means for the end. Thus the procedure of moral science is strictly analogous to that of the other sciences, studying like them the constant and necessary relations, with a fact of experience as the point of departure. The fundamental principle of morality does not express a "duty." It does not say, You *ought* to will this. It says, As a matter of fact, you do will this; and as a matter of fact, certain means are necessary to obtain this; therefore, logically, you "ought" to will these means. The word "ought" signifies only a logical accord of the consequences with the principle, an adaptation of the means to the end. In this way moral science is attached, not to something arbitrary, but to a fact of experience. In the other arts and sciences, no one thinks of denying the reasonableness of such a method. This kind of procedure claims to be scientific and "descriptive"; the other claims to be metaphysical, more fundamental, and "normative."

Prescriptions should be the last work of moral

science. First, there should be the determination of the ends that men will; secondly, an appeal to the past to discover the laws of human conduct, the regular connection between acts and their consequences; and then, finally, the prescription of the means adapted to the attainment of the ends willed. First, regard the present and ascertain the wills; secondly, regard the past and discover the laws; thirdly, regard the future and prescribe the means.¹

Moral science is not to furnish us with the means of making ourselves better or "converting" ourselves. It limits itself to describing, explaining, classifying, the different human characters; just as a zoologist describes and classifies the various types of animals. The zoologist does not "prescribe." He does not approach a pig and say, You ought to become a goat; nor does he go to a particular kind of pig and say, You ought to become a different kind of pig. With what reason does the moralist approach a particular kind of man and say, You ought to become a different kind of man? Moral science and moral philosophy cannot change an egoist into an altruist. Differences of character are in-born and unchangeable. The bad man is bad from birth. As Schopenhauer said, we cannot be taught to will. "To learn" is an affair of the intelligence; but willing is prior to the intelligence; one cannot learn to will good or evil.²

¹ It was intimated in the chapter on "Evolution and Obligation" that the writer allied himself to Evolutionistic Ethics in as much as descriptive. The affinity appears clearly in the present section.

² Schopenhauer, *op. cit.*, Bd. I, § 66; Bd. II, Kapitel 47. .

The good man is, and remains, good; the bad man is, and remains, bad. A man cannot choose to be good or bad; his "choice" is an indication of what he already is. He would not affirm the idea of morality, if he were not already moral. He would not march towards its greater realization, if he had not already in a measure accomplished it. He would not be disquieted by ideals of the better, if his will were not already a good will. His character, his will, is the primary fact.

It may be objected that this doctrine negates all liberty, and excludes the possibility of modifying one's character. But what is meant by this possibility? Analyze the sentence, "I have the ability to modify my character." "My character" is the object worked upon, and "I" possess the ability to modify it. But what is this "I" that chooses to modify my character? How shall this "I" be designated? It is itself "my character," and you have the statement, "my character has the ability to modify my character." But have I *two* characters, one acting and one acted upon? Before "I" could change "my character," "I" should have to change my "I."

Society, in its treatment of criminals, shows a recognition of the fact that the will is the essential nature, and the intellect secondary. In former times many thousands of people were put to death because of heresy in religious or political opinions. In our days this is not done. It is held now that any opinion may be entertained and expressed with impunity. But the expression of an opinion that does not at all agree with the general opinions

in the community may work a good deal of embarrassment and even positive injury. Why is it that such an act is not judged punishable just as the commission of a theft or an assault? The "Free-willists" and "Libertarians" cannot tell why. According to them, responsibility in the two cases must be the same. The one is no more fatally caused than the other. Both are the result of free choice. The Utilitarian cannot give a reason for society's different treatment of the two cases. According to him, both are socially harmful, and must be judged to deserve the same punishment. According to us, however, there is a fundamental difference between the two. A false opinion expresses a secondary part of man's nature, the intellect; while a perverse deed expresses the primary and fundamental part, the will. A wrong opinion is an "error"; a wrong deed is a "perversity." An untrue opinion is something superficial to our nature; a bad act is something fundamentally inherent in our nature. A wrong opinion is accidental and transitory; a wrong will is essential and permanent. An intellect that is erroneous is corrigible; a will that is perverse is not corrigible. We know that we do not hold some opinions now that we held in the past, and we do not feel assured that we shall always hold the same opinions which we now hold; but we expect our characters to remain always the same. The intellect is secondary; the will, primary.¹

The will is, in each and every man, exactly

¹ Cf. Tarde, "*Études pénales et sociales*," essai sur "*L'Idée de culpabilité*," pp. 321-354.

what it is and can only be; and it is foolish for us to dream of "prescribing" what it *ought* to be. The notion of "duty" is without any meaning when it is applied to the will. "Duty," if the word is to be used at all, has meaning only with reference to the means of accomplishing the will. To accomplish such and such a will, a certain line of action becomes a duty. There is nothing from which to start to determine what a will ought to be. We discover first what the will is, and then we determine what ought to be done to accomplish that will. We ascertain both through facts of experience.

Moral science fulfills its office when it discovers facts. It is mistaken when it pretends to prescribe duties as independent of, or superior to, facts. After discovering and classifying the wills of men, and the means of accomplishing these wills, moral science makes known these means as conditional prescriptions, of the same nature as the practical applications of geometry or any other science. Geometry says, If you wish to survey a field, the best way of proceeding is thus and thus. It does not say categorically, You ought to survey a field.

Moral prescriptions are of the same conditional character. If you wish to be temperate, such and such a course of conduct is necessary. But I may not wish to be temperate. If you wish to be healthy, temperance is necessary. But I may not wish to be healthy. Thus we may pass from one principle to another still more inclusive, again and again, in the search for a final principle that may be accepted as absolute. What fixed

point shall we take, from which to hang a system of moral philosophy? Can it be a metaphysical "duty" or "categorical imperative," or must it be a "fact" of experience? Moral science says, a fact of experience, namely, the individual's will. The process may be carried back as far as you please, but the issue always comes to this: to accept the individual will as the ultimate fact, or to claim for some categorical imperative an absolute value, imposing itself without condition or justification. Moral science cannot accept as the foundation an absolute imperative. It cannot start with what ought unconditionally to be willed. It starts with a fact, with what is actually willed. It proceeds thus: To discover what is the good for any being whatsoever, we must first find out what it aims to accomplish; to discover what any being aims to accomplish, we must first ascertain the direction or development of its nature. This is the order: nature, aim, good. The good is defined by the aim; the aim is defined by the nature. Applied to man: Observe, analyze, and know the human nature; from this nature deduce the end or purpose or will; and from this, discover the good, and what man "ought" to do to accomplish it. Everything depends upon a knowledge of the nature of the man. My nature is such as it is; being such as it is, I will such and such things; willing such and such things, such and such conduct is necessary for their attainment. Such is the *science* of conduct. It adopts this positivistic procedure instead of a procedure that attempts to construct or prescribe conduct for man on the supposition

that his end or aim has been imposed upon him externally — perhaps by his Creator — and that he has a “destiny” to accomplish. By the good for man it understands a wholly *natural* good, a good affirmed by man’s nature, that is, by his own will. There is for me no obligation superior to my will. But my will seeks the aid of its intellect in accomplishing itself. In the name of wisdom you may present facts or knowledge to my intellect, that my will may have the aid of an enlightened intellect when endeavoring to realize itself. As a moral adviser you may succeed in showing me the preferability of conforming to the general ways of society, in as much as I may thereby accomplish better my own will. But you must not command me concerning what I shall will. I may be enlightened and persuaded, but not commanded. You must not assert the right to obligate my will. My will is my nature; and I will live and must live according to my nature.

Can the functioning of any individual’s intellect and imagination be trusted to furnish the final end of action in such a way as to entitle its results to claim authority for all human beings? No; no individual can be so trusted. In each and every case, the individual must decide for himself, and his decision is valid only for himself. It seems useless, or worse than useless, for a philosopher to prescribe an ideal which all men ought to follow absolutely and unconditionally. Every person actually has, and from the nature of human beings must have, an ideal of his own. This is, and must be, for him the final authority.

Human natures differ, and their circumstances differ; and consequently their ideals differ. That man is more or less foolish who sets himself up as the measure of all things moral for all the world. The only nature that a man knows, or is justified in expressing an ideal for, is his own; and modesty needs to be exercised in making sweeping statements concerning how all human natures and reasons ought to work. It is a simple presumption when an individual prescribes *the law for all men*. It is sheer folly to try to reduce all the rich individuality of human nature and life throughout the multitudes of the human race to a uniformity of expression and development. Each individual, such as he is by inherited disposition and by individual experiences, makes, and must make, his own ideal of life and development. Individuality is as real a phenomenon in the moral life as in any other department of life.

The intellectualists in ethics sometimes set up some such ideal as this: "Conform your actions to the good of the universe." But what is the "good of the universe"? It can be only that conception of good which appeals to my special nature. The universe contains very diverse elements. I will not conform my action to the action of such elements of the universe as earthquakes, tornadoes, poisonous atmospheres, noxious plants, ferocious beasts, reptiles, and the like. I will make a selection among the phenomena of the universe, and will throw my force on the side of the good forces in their warfare against the evil forces. Why should I serve the universe? A large part of the universe as I know it is bad.

I serve other parts of the universe when I wage war upon these bad parts. My own nature must be the judge of what forces are good and what are evil.

The intellectualists may next say, "Then conform your actions to the good of humanity." But what is humanity? On every hand I see defective men — half-developed, crazy, vicious. Am I called upon to gratify these men, or to promote what they would regard as their good? I must judge what parts of humanity should be helped to continue in existence and to develop, and what parts should be helped to die out. I must think that the qualities of most worth in humanity are those in which I differ from beasts and misformed men. My own nature is the judge of what is good and what bad. Even if I follow the opinions of some one else, and say I will do as he says since he knows better than I what is good, I am following still my own judgment. I am selecting one out of a possible many.

The moral philosopher says next, "You may develop all the faculties of your nature; but, mark you, they all make their demands at the same time; instincts push, appetites crave, passions cry aloud, sensibilities languish, and reason speaks. Is anarchy to obtain? No; your suggestion must be changed to this, Develop all the faculties of your nature, but organize them, and subordinate the inferior to the superior." In reply, we inquire, On what basis shall certain faculties be declared inferior, and certain others superior, for another person? Is there to be a canvass of a great number of human beings to

find out what is the general arrangement, and then this general rule declared obligatory upon all? Or is there to be a sinking into the realm of pure thought, and then a declaration of what is obligatory? Or is there to be a recourse to the commands of a creator, or to a metaphysical speculation about the destiny of man and the universe? On this tack, also, we are forced back again to the position that the individual nature or will has to be accepted as final in each particular case. Why should I be obligated to prefer what is the general preference, if in my particular nature I find the order reversed? Why should I conform my conduct to that of other beings different from myself, having different natures and different interests, instead of regulating my conduct according to my own nature? I rebel against the imposition upon me of an obligation to resemble the majority of men any more than I do. If I take great delight in the pleasures of sense, some delight in æsthetic pleasures, and but little delight in the exercise of the intellect, how will you convince me that in my particular case the reverse order ought to be preferred? What ground of obligation will you offer that I can accept as superior to my nature? I care nothing about what you have to say of your discovery of the essence of humanity, the true nature of man, the proper aim of human personal endeavor. Such a dream is of no interest to me. There is nothing common between the "ideal" which you describe and my present actual nature. What do I care for your metaphysics of the ultimate law and duty for man, the finality of human endeavor,

the superiority of the spiritual over the material; or for your metaphysics of the nature, plan, and order of the universe, the Ultimate Reality, the World-Ground, the Absolute? I am what I am, a being with certain faculties and a certain organization, a certain nature. Whether the universe develops according to a plan conceived by the divine thought, whether it is moving towards an end under the guidance of the divine hand, is a matter of no concern to me. Whether the world is the work of a good God or of a bad Demon, whether it is governed by a kind Providence or under the reign of a blind Fatality, I have my own nature, the law of my being. I am what I am, and cannot be otherwise. Your considerations of the origin, essence, and destiny of things seem to me only vain dreams.

In all that is said of the actual nature of man, of course we must not understand a nature without ideals; because, in general, it is the nature of man to have ideals. The will to live represents to itself always new ways and means of development. The presence and influence of ideals is one of the greatest facts in human nature. Man is, indeed, "an idealizing energy." His dissatisfaction with his present condition and attainments is a powerful force towards bringing about the improvement of his conditions and the enlargement of his attainments. He is naturally determined to compare the present with a conceived possible future which is valued more highly than the present. A ceaseless reaching out beyond present possessions to grasp after greater goods characterizes his life. In all stages of his develop-

ment he forms a picture of a future which is better than the present, and he makes more or less strenuous efforts to realize it. His history is a record of his striving to realize his unfolding aspirations. Human life is founded upon, is shot through and through with, and is guided and inspired by, ideals of a better.¹ But an ideal is not supernatural or unnatural; it is entirely natural. Its roots do not lie in something transcendental, but in the actual nature of man. An ideal is a consciousness of the will's fundamental direction or aim. Instead of the actual living personal ideal of each individual nature, certain so-called idealists would urge upon us the duty of willing an abstract impersonal one. But I recognize no duty of willing an ideal. I will the ideal that I will. There is no other standard by which to try it, to see whether it is right. An ideal is a necessary ideal, and fits the nature of which it is the expression. It depends upon the person for its qualities and force. It is not "free"; it is in a chain of causation. It is the product of the nature. I designate mine as "fullness of life." And it seems to me that this designation is appropriate for the aspirations of most men. If you ask more specifically about the content of my conception of a full human life, I say, we may distinguish at least four general forms of a normal human life: the sensual good or the good of pleasure, the æsthetical good or the good of beauty, the intellectual good or the good of truth, and the social good or the good of living with, in, and through one's fellows. Normal man has sensibility—he is capable of pleasure

¹ Cf. Ladd, *op. cit.*, pp. 626, 651.

and pain; he has an æsthetical nature — he is capable of loving the beautiful; he has an intellect — he is capable of knowing and appreciating the true; he has a social nature — he is capable of living with, in, and through his fellow-men. In the ideal life every power would be perfectly active: the power for pleasure, the power for enjoyment of the beautiful, the power for knowing, and the power for social expansion of life.

If some one says, "I have a different ideal," we can only say, Then you must follow it. We know better than to try to persuade you to choose and follow some other; because it is impossible. An ideal is the product of the particular nature. Your nature you cannot change; and you cannot change your ideal. Your ideal is as good for you as mine is for me. Most assuredly I do not say that you ought to have mine; it is absolutely impossible that you have it. I will not presume to say what ought to be the ideal for you or for the world. An ideal is what it is, and it cannot be other than it is. One ideal is no "higher" or "better" or "nobler" or more "obligatory" than another, except for the person who has it. To me mine is higher, better, nobler, than any other; and I know that to you yours holds the same rank. I do not exhort you to follow your ideal. I know you will follow it. Indeed, we can say, you will have to follow it, if these words are understood as containing no reference to external constraint. I can recognize no "obligation" either to form ideals or to conform to them. An ideal means simply *what is willed*. The word "obligation" is usually employed to

designate something imposed upon the will. But if my "ideal" is simply *what I will*, what sense is there in saying that my will *ought* to pursue it? Of course I shall pursue it; I cannot do otherwise than pursue it. It denotes what I *am* pursuing. Each man shapes his conduct according to the conception of the future development of himself which he wills to attain. It is false to say "which he believes he *ought* to attain"; "ought" simply has no meaning when thus used. You may say that such and such a course of action ought to be followed in order to attain what he wills; but it is an error to say that he ought or ought not to will what he wills.

The "self that ought to be" is only a projection into the future of the "self that is," with the removal of the hindrances that now hold it in restraint. The "self that is" wills, and wills to live as largely or fully as possible. It wills success in living. The goal which it sets before itself for attainment constitutes the "self that ought to be," and is only the willed development of the present self, the realization of the present will, the overcoming of all that now hinders the present will from accomplishing itself. The present will recognizes itself as restrained, interfered with, sometimes almost thwarted. Its ideal, the "self that ought to be," is its representation of a future when these hindrances to its realization shall have been overcome and removed, and when it shall function perfectly, and shall succeed in accomplishing itself. The present self's picture, ideal, or will of that future attainment is the "self that ought to be." The "self that ought to be" has no mys-

terious, theological, or metaphysical meaning. It is not an external command or imposition upon the "self that is." It is nothing more important than, or at all different from, the present self. It does not work upon, but is the work of, this self.

The "self that is" sees among its fellows concrete examples that approximate in a measure the ideal which it sets before itself; or it finds in the customs, institutions, and records of society certain descriptions of life which it regards as good to strive for. In this way it comes to affirm an ideal of the "self that ought to be"; that is, a condition of life which it now wills to attain some time in the future. This preferential selection, however, is a selection on the part of the "self that is," the present actuality, in the domain of facts, and subject to the natural laws of facts. The preference could not be different from what it is. The "self that is" is of necessity what it is. And it chooses its ideals necessarily. If the present self were different from what it is, or if any of these "representations of lives" which it compares and selects among were absent, its choice would be different. An ideal is as much a natural fact and subject to natural laws of sequence and causation as any other natural fact. It is an error to say that the "self that ought to be" is morally higher or better than the "self that is." It is the creation of the "self that is." The credit for the glory of the ideal "self that ought to be" is to be ascribed entirely to the present actual self; because it is this self that entertains the idea of that future advancement and affirms it as an ideal or good to strive for.

To the glory of the "self that is" let all human attainment bear witness! The wills of most men are naturally social and loving. The natural good will of man is the inextinguishable source of all good in the world. It ever seeks and finds better ways of realizing itself and of attaining on earth the conditions of a perfect human life.

CHAPTER X

THE WILL TO LIVE THE LARGEST LIFE

It has now been shown that will and reason are not coördinate faculties of man's nature. The will is the fundamental nature. It strives to *feel*, to *enjoy*, to *love*, to *think*, to *reason*, etc. In the individual's nature there are life powers, energies, forces, which press towards activity and development. They push until they burst forth.

I accept Schopenhauer's doctrine that the fundamental part of every man's nature is the will to live. But I emphasize the variety of the forms in which man's full life consists. The will to live in man must not be interpreted or described as a will to live in a simply vegetative way or a merely sensual way, but as embracing, among other things, full activity of the æsthetical, intellectual, and social nature of man. A full human life includes activity of the sensibility (as was shown by the Epicureans, Hedonists, and Utilitarians); but this is not the whole of it, it includes also activity of the intellect (as Aristotle and Spinoza taught); but neither is this the whole of it, it includes also activity of the social nature (as Shaftesbury and Hutcheson showed). And these specifications must not be regarded as comprehending the whole of life, or as furnishing a normative perscription of what it *ought* to be.

They are intended as a summary description of what, in general, man's life is.

The ideal which the will seeks differs in Stoic, Epicurean, Cynic, Rationalist, Utilitarian, Materialist, Idealist, and Religious Mystic. The will may seek realization in the acquisition of knowledge and the attainment of truth, or in commerce, trade, and the accumulation of wealth, or in the possession of political power, or in the joys of domestic life and the rearing of children, or in the display of vigor and skill on tennis court or ball field. In countless forms, the will to live may be active in men. "The ideal takes different forms for Greek, Roman, and Hebrew. . . . It is not the same for man as for woman, for the warrior as for the scholar, for the sailor as for the peasant. Only a certain fundamental character is the same in all, just as the fundamental anatomical physiological type of the human body is common to all men. The higher the development of mental life reaches, so much the more differentiated and individualized the inner life becomes; just as the outward form, corresponding to the inner development, becomes more and more individualized."¹

No individual can *prescribe* what shall be the ideal of another, or in what particular forms of activity his innermost nature shall unfold. The full life for any particular individual consists in the exercise of *his* capacities, the realization of *his* will, the normal activity of the vital functions which constitute *his* nature. Each person wills to live his life, the life in which all his powers

¹ Paulsen, *op. cit.*, Bd. I, S. 265.

come to full exercise. Anything is good for him if it furthers his life; it is bad if it hinders his life. Another way of saying this is, Anything is good for him if it satisfies his will, and it is good because it satisfies his will. You may say, "But this will-to-live, of which you speak, this life, of what use is it? What is its end or justification?" I reply that it is good in and for itself. I do not conceive life as merely instrumental or at all instrumental to some kind of good lying outside of itself. It suffices unto itself. It is the good, the supreme good, the only good. Whether it is good for anything outside of itself, I do not know and I do not care. You ask me how I prove that life, the full life, is good. I reply, There is no proof *a priori* or logically. The proof is altogether a proof by experience. I experience life as good. I experience the will to live, and I experience the good of living. I appreciate the fact that some others experience life as evil — so evil that they seek escape through suicide. I cannot prove to them that life is good.

It is a mistake to say that the will is always directed towards pleasure, thought, or any one activity. It is a better characterization of normal human will to say that it is directed towards the objective realization of full or perfect activity for all its various powers or energies; or in other words, towards the perfect accomplishment of its complex developing nature. "Man wills to play and to learn, to work and to acquire wealth, to possess and to enjoy, to form and to create; he wills to love and to respect, to obey and to rule, to fight and to win, to make poetry and to dream,

to think and to investigate.”¹ And he wills all these things just as his individual nature demands them. Different natures differ. The kinds of life’s forces, their number, and their relative strength with reference to one another, as shown in one nature, cannot be imposed upon another nature as a duty or obligation. If my nature will “play pushpin,” it is a waste of your time for you to come and sing to me the praises of “poetry.” I reply, “Reading and writing poetry may be all right for you, but as for me, I will play pushpin. I cannot live without pushpin. For me to live is to play pushpin.”

A defect in some of the great schools of ethics is that they interpret human life too narrowly; for instance, the Utilitarian view that pleasure or happiness is the sole end of man. This vague general term some reduce exclusively to gratification of the sensibility; some others extend it to include gratification of the intellectual desires. But the term “pleasure” or “happiness” is too limited. It ordinarily has a tinge of passivity. It can hardly be stretched to denote the perfect expansion of all of life’s activities. Pleasure or happiness represents only a part of life. It does not sufficiently characterize the living of a life in full health, full vigor, endowed with faculties as perfect as possible and functioning without hindrance. Pleasure may attend the activity of any of the elements of life, but it is not to be regarded as the principle of the activity, but only as a consequence or an attendant of the activity, or as one of life’s forms. The various faculties did not act originally

¹ Paulsen, *op. cit.*, Bd I, S 263.

in order to find pleasure; but in acting, pleasure was found. Action gave pleasure; but action did not take place for pleasure. Later, pleasure came to have a reactive influence upon the activity of the faculties, and to be, in some cases, the cause of activity. But it is wrong to say that pleasure is primary. First, last, and self-moving is life, activity. To live is the supreme end of life, and to live as largely or fully as possible.

"The physician, when choosing his medicines, does not consider what will give the greatest pleasure to the patient, but what will have the best effect upon the organs and functions of life. The educator asks, not whether this or that method of discipline and instruction is likely to lead the pupil to the attainment of the maximum pleasure, but whether it is likely to promote the development of his intellectual and moral capacities. . . . Life itself, and its healthful, virtuous, and beautiful activity, is what should be absolutely valued and sought, not the isolated feeling-reflex that accompanies it. Pleasure, of course, exists and belongs to life; but it is not the absolute good, and is not the final motive of the agent's will." ¹

If "pleasure" or "happiness" is to be the word used to designate the greatest good, then it must denote, not a particular form of experience, but the foundation of activity, the pleasure of willing, of living. This latter is more or less independent of external objects, and identical with the consciousness of life itself. Sometimes we act, not for pleasure, but simply to act; we think, to think;

¹ Paulsen, *op. cit.*, Bd. I, S. 277-279.

we live, to live. There is within us an accumulated force which demands to be let loose. If this is checked by some obstacle, the force becomes desire or aversion; if it is satisfied, there is pleasure; if it is thwarted, there is pain. But it does not happen that the stored-up activity pours out uniquely in view of a pleasure, with pleasure as the end or aim. Life unfolds itself, exercises itself, acts because it is life. Pleasure accompanies the activity; but life, activity, is the first thing; the attendant pleasure is secondary. We must live first, then enjoy living.¹

Pleasure is certainly one of the forms of life. A full human life includes activity of the sensibility. But "pleasure" is not the best expression for the whole of life's aim. It represents only one side of our nature, the sensual side, and does not express our spiritual capacities. The aim of moral action is not "happiness," but "life." Courcelle-Seneuil proposes to substitute in place of the formula "the greatest happiness" the "formula of life." "Man being born to live, life is his end. Consequently his acts may be judged good or bad according as they tend to the conservation and increase of life, or, on the contrary, to the diminution and destruction of life in humanity. Life in humanity will therefore be the criterion of good and evil, of right and wrong."²

Neither should the fundamental direction of the will be said to be always and only towards thought

¹ Cf. Guyau, *op. cit.*, p. 424, and "Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction," p. 90.

² Quoted by Guyau, "La Morale anglaise contemporaine," p. 268.

or the activity of the intelligence. Reason is one of the forms in which the will realizes itself, but it is only one. It is not the whole of living. It will not do to say that intelligence is the one in-itself-good. Intelligence considered without relation to sensibility and will, a pure intelligence that did not will anything and did not feel anything, that never acted and never enjoyed, that merely mirrored things, would be a very small good. Intelligence is good because it increases the extent of life. What gives to anything its value or "good" is its relation to human life, to its maintenance and increase or enlargement. If there were not the will to live, of what good would intelligence be? Intelligence is part of life, or one of the forms in which life is active, but it must not be erected into the sole good. A part is but a part, and has even its own full value only when the other parts are also present. The full life is the highest good — the will to live accomplishing itself in many forms — thinking, knowing, feeling, enjoying, loving, and so on, according to the particular nature.

But we must not commit the error of going to the other extreme and regarding intelligence and reason as not an integral part of life. When Schopenhauer teaches us that the intellect's consciousness of life's forces and their development is a secondary matter which gradually develops, we must not understand that knowing is apart from life to behold it. Knowing is an integral part of living, one of the forms in which life unfolds itself, one of life's activities. Schopenhauer says that the intelligence is secondary to the will,

and is to instruct the will concerning ways and means, to discover what is advantageous or disadvantageous in the pursuit of satisfaction. The intellect is the creation of the will, and is the servant of the will, to help further the attainment of what the will seeks.¹ Is this the best way to state the case? Most certainly the intellect is secondary. The will is the essence of man's nature. But the intellect is not something extraneous to life's end, something to help attain another end. It is itself one of the ends of life. It is an integral part of life, one of the forms in which the will to live comes to expression. Knowing is a form of living. Knowing is, of course, instrumental towards the other forms of life's activity, just as they, on the other hand, react beneficially upon knowing. The will to live succeeds but poorly if it is blind. Rationality serves it well. Knowledge adds certainty to the will in its acts, security in accomplishing the results sought. But knowing must not be regarded as merely an instrument. It is an end at which the will aims. The will aims to know, and to know as much and as perfectly as possible. Knowing is one of the forms, is perhaps the chief form, in which the will to live accomplishes its aim. The will to live objectifies itself, realizes itself, accomplishes itself, in and through the activity of knowing.

So intelligence is a necessary element of the largest possible life. The will acting, if acting without consciousness of itself as acting and accomplishing itself, would not be the good. In short, there must be "fullness" of life — life

¹ See Schopenhauer, *op. cit.*, Bd. II, Kap. 19.

active in all its forms. Life is not life if it does not feel, will, and know itself.

This position leads us to a "middle course" in estimating the value of *truth*. On the one hand, some Absolutists would seek truth as the supreme and only good; on the other hand, some Utilitarians and Pragmatists would seek truth with an aim wholly practical and commercial, for what it will "bring in," or, in James's words, for its "cash-value in experiential terms."¹ Is it not best to regard the search for truth as the search for the gratification of a part of man's nature, the intellect? Man is a being of intelligence, and naturally seeks to exercise and gratify his intelligence. The activity of the intellect is an essential part (though only a part) of life's activity, and is a good. Many who oppose the right to the good, and claim the independence and superiority of the right, wish to restrict the meaning of the good to the gratification or satisfaction of the "lower" wants, the physical or sensual wants and desires. But such a limitation is not fitting. The good is also the satisfaction of the "higher" wants, those expressive of our rational nature. Reason may pronounce a thing good just as truly as the palate. The good declared by the reason to be good is ordinarily both "higher" and "greater," being more promotive of the continuance and enlargement of life and its activities.

This explains the value of truth. Truth is an interest of life; the search for it is one of life's activities. Life would be stunted if this activity were repressed. Intellect exercises itself and is

¹ James, "Pragmatism," p. 200.

gratified by seeking truth and possessing it. Without truth the individual cannot live his largest life. He is willing to work and sweat and struggle and suffer for it as for life. It is life.

Enthusiasm for truth requires, both in truth and in man, something superior to what Utilitarianism makes room for. The Utilitarian's respect for thought is not inspired by the dignity of thought itself, but by its utility. He does not venerate in thought that which it is in itself, but the infinite series of its causes and consequences. Before comprehending what it is worth, according to the Utilitarian, it is necessary to consider the course of things in the past and future. My thought, when it deranges the equilibrium of the received opinions by a dangerous novelty, has need of justification; and truth, when it comes to trouble the world, which would go on well without it, has need of an excuse. How can this view inspire one with an inviolable respect for truth, and the determination to seek it even in persecution and pain? How would one suffer for something which is worth only what pleasure it yields? Degraded to the rank of an instrument, verity does not any longer merit that I seek it for itself, and is not worthy of my enthusiasm. To estimate thought worthy only as it gives pleasure is, perhaps, by removing from it its value, to remove from it its power. If I think only for enjoyment, I shall think less. If I seek truth with an aim wholly practical and commercial, for what it will bring me in, I run great risk of not finding it. If I seek truth, and find truth, it is because I love it; and if I am able

to love it, it is because I believe it identical with what I call the good. It is good to possess truth; it is good, it is moral, that thought agrees with itself, does not nullify itself by contradictions, does not debase itself with errors. To seek truth appears worthy in itself. It is in seeking it this way that one finds it. To discover truth it is necessary to have a will ready for sacrifice, ready to give of itself without measure in order to obtain that which is without price. Genius for truth is above all else enthusiasm, abnegation, disinterestedness, devotion to the end pursued.¹

"If the truth should prove contrary to all my previsions and all my desires, contrary to all that I have believed and all that is believed around me, contrary to all that I myself have said; if it should undo all my associations of ideas, disarrange all the combinations, all the system, which my intelligence has built; if it should nullify all the work of all my past life; still, if it is the truth, however painful it be, I want to find it, I want to recognize it, I want to believe it; for the truth is worthy of love, and I love it."²

Truth, then, like pleasure, is an integral part of life, but not the whole of it. Beauty is another part; goodness, another; love, another; worship, another; and so on.³

¹ Cf. Guyau, *op. cit.*, pp. 409-414.

² *Ibid.*, p. 411.

³ I ought, perhaps, to point out a few likenesses and a few unlikenesses between "the will to live the largest life" and Nietzsche's *Wille zur Macht*. Nietzsche interpreted life, not only as the will to live (Schopenhauer), but as the will for increase and intensification of life; not only as a struggle for existence (Darwin), but as a struggle for higher and stronger existence;

The element of man's nature that is of most importance to us in our investigation of egoism and altruism is the will to live with, in, and through one's fellows.

There is in life a natural principle of expansion and fecundity. It is this that makes it impossible for the individual to be sufficient in himself. The richest life finds itself the most forced to propagate itself, to distribute itself prodigally, to bestow itself, to sacrifice itself. Hence it follows that the most perfect organism will be also the most sociable, and that the willed ideal of the individual life is the life in common. In this

not only as the impulse for self-maintenance (Spinoza), but as the impulse for self-enlargement; not only as love and hate (Empedocles), but as strife for victory and power. (See Peter Gast's "Nachbericht" at the end of "Zur Genealogie der Moral.") The *Wille zur Macht* is undoubtedly a correct characterization of the will in a good many men. In some, it is "pure," containing no mixture of a will to help others. With Nietzsche this was the ideal will. He regarded such a will as the highest attainment of natural evolution. He looked forward to some distant time when the human race would contain only such great individuals. He confessed that at present there are but few such wills. The great mass of men are "human — all-too-human." I emphasize this last fact, and maintain that the *Wille zur Macht* is too narrow a term to use in describing man's will. The exercise of power might be said to be one of the forms in which the will to live comes to expression. Almost every man wills at times to have power, to be master, to overcome, to rule, to dominate. At other times, however, he wills to be subject, to be mastered, to be overcome, to be ruled. There are but very few natures in which the will to live narrows into just one form, and that the *Wille zur Macht*. Though Nietzsche was wrong in his characterization of the will, he was right in regarding the will as the essential and fundamental nature of man, and in regarding life as a spontaneous activity of inner forces or powers.

way it is possible to place in the nature of man the source of all his instincts of sympathy, sociability, and disinterestedness, instead of representing them as the product of the social environment and circumstances, the work of education and heredity, or as acquired more or less artificially in the course of evolution, and in consequence as more or less adventitious. There is in the very bosom of natural life an evolution which corresponds to the evolution of social life, and which renders this latter possible — is its cause rather than its result.¹

There is in every man “the will to live,” and “the will to live the largest life possible.” In the present development of normal man there are many modes or forms of living. That life is the “largest” that extends beyond the boundaries of its own body and nourishes or supports most others; that is, that life is the largest that lives in and through most others. A man lives in and through his wife and children, his relatives and friends, his business and political connections, etc. If his activity in any one of these branches is cut off, he feels his life maimed. He always feels a stress after larger and larger life. Whenever he has reached as full development in one direction as external circumstances will allow, he seeks out another direction for growth.

It is in the nature of man that the bridge between egoism and altruism must be sought, in the will, in the fundamental and essential life that seeks larger expression in all the activities of life, including the great and numerous social activities.

¹ Cf. Guyau, *op. cit.*, pp. 424–425.

Man naturally wills to have intimate and extensive social relationships.

The mistake in numerous attempts to bridge egoism and altruism is this: they suppose most men egoists, independent individuals, with selfish feelings, impulses, interests, and volitions; and then try to carry them over to a state of altruism. But this aim cannot be accomplished. An egoist cannot be converted into an altruist. The only way out of the difficulty is to say that an egoist is an abnormality; that normal man is not egoistic. The interests of others are so completely interlaced with his own that they are a unity, inseparable into parts.

Natural goodness does not require that the individual derive no happiness in the happiness of others, or be indifferent to it. The promotion of others' happiness is of course happiness to him. But this does not mean that he is selfish, or bent only upon self-interest. It simply means that he feels and thinks his interests identical with the interests of others, and is satisfied only when they are satisfied. If what happened to others were a matter of total indifference to him, it could not become an object of his will. To this extent, then, the ego remains important and central; but this is not what is meant by egoism or self-interest. Egoism or self-interest indicates the inability to experience sadness over another's sadness and joy in another's joy, to be pained at the thought of others pained and to find pleasure in the thought of their relief. To hold, then, that because advance of another's well-being is accompanied by a feeling of satisfaction, I am to that

extent self-centred, is an error. This feeling of satisfaction is the state of a "self," but is the exact opposite of "selfish," in the sense of being motivated by the thought of some private advantage to self.

The egoistic impulse is seen often enough in life. Self-interest is sought at the cost of others' interest. But very few men are egoists in the sense that they seek exclusively their own interests and are wholly insensible to the good or evil of others. Nearly always there is at least a small circle of persons near for whose good the man is concerned, and whose interests he wishes to promote if it does not cost him too much. Most men have a much larger circle of persons for whose good they care even as they care for their own, and are ready to make profound sacrifices. In many men this circle is extended to include the community and the nation. In a few it is as large as humanity; and the willingness of sacrifice extends to the sacrifice of life. But it is incorrect to call this altruism. The distinction between self and others is simply not made. The conflict between egoism and altruism is transcended. Can we believe that many mothers nourish and bring up their children with any distinction between interests? The truth here is that the mother looks upon the two lives as one. She identifies herself and her child. She lives in the life of her child.

That there are some individuals in whom the social impulses are defective or even entirely lacking, some to whom the well-being of others is a matter of indifference, and even some to whom

the detriment of others is a pleasure, is no objection to the general statement that normal man identifies the good of others with his own; just as the fact that there are some individuals with defective brains and mental organization does not destroy the general statement that man, normal man, has reason. An individual without sympathy with his fellows is an abnormality as truly as an imbecile or insane person.

Egoism, then, must be said to be an abnormality. Furthermore, altruism in its strictest sense is as much an abnormality as egoism. It is equally wrong to maintain that the moral aim of action is the welfare of others exclusive of self. It is Schopenhauer's doctrine that actions which have for their motive the well-being of self have no moral worth, and that moral worth attaches only to those actions which have for their motive solely the well-being of others. But with this definition of moral worth, only few men are virtuous. There are some who always make the distinction between the good of self and the good of others, and then prefer and pursue the good of others at the cost of the good of self. But ordinarily men do not make this distinction. Normal man seeks to increase as much as possible the general or universal happiness, or in other words, to make happy as many persons as possible, but never thinks that the happiness of the actor himself should be excluded from this sum. No matter what content the term "happiness" has, whether it includes only material and physical well-being or includes also all the higher and deeper spiritual values that have ever been assigned to

it, the individual's own happiness enters into it without vitiating the morality of its search. Either the principle that the universal good consists in the good of all the individuals is false, or else the good of the person acting has its worthy share in the total.

True morality consists not in other-regarding interests alone, nor in self-regarding interests alone, but in the harmonious union of both, in the complete identification of the interests of self and the interests of others. Even in genuine self-sacrifice the interests of self and others are not separated, but are identified. The heroes who fell in battle for their country — was their motive egoistic or altruistic? The question wishes to separate what cannot be separated. They fought and died for their country, but the country is theirs and not another's; they fought and died for their honor and glory, but theirs is their country's honor and glory.¹

It is absurd to say that all men are egoists, or that all are altruists. The least observation shows that numerous cases of both exist; and neither can be said to be the normal type. In general, men have the disposition to identify the life of self and the life of others. This identification in the will of the interests of self and the interests of others is so general that both altruism and egoism may be called abnormalities. The normal human will identifies self and others. Man shares the life of his fellows. He rejoices in their joy and is sad in their sadness. May we not represent man's nature by this larger conception than

¹ Cf. Paulsen, *op. cit.*, Bd. I, S. 382.

that of egoism and altruism? To us it seems to render a better account of his powers. We believe in his natural goodness and disinterestedness; we have faith in his social nature. We need not take recourse to something noumenal or transcendental; we find salvation in an immanent tendency in man, the fundamental tendency towards an enlargement of self, the will to live with, in, and through others.

With reference to *explaining* the phenomena of the identification of interests, I accept as satisfactory the main points of the doctrines of the psychologists, physiologists, and evolutionists, which I have adversely criticised with reference to *justifying obligation*. Thanks to the working of the forces which these various investigators have discovered and described, the distinction between "I" and "Not I," "Mine" and "Not Mine," is being transcended. The objective relations of agreement among men are paralleled by the subjective relations of agreement.

The normal, healthy human being lives too much to live only for himself. He accumulates a surplus of life, a superabundance, which demands outlet, expenditure, a giving away. In his essential nature there are powers that press for activity in and through his fellows.

Under its physiological aspect, man's superabundance of life gives itself out in generation, reproduction. In the intellectual life also there is reproduction, a giving of life to increase life, a bestowing of life upon others. Man feels an internal constraint to propagate the truths he has discovered. He wills to see his ideas live again

in others. The intellectual nature is socialized. Because it is so rich, it calls nothing its own private possession. There is also a fecundity of emotion and sensibility. Man has more tears than are necessary for his own sufferings, and more joys than he alone can contain. He is necessitated by his nature to pour out towards others, to multiply himself by union with other sensibilities. He must share with others his enjoyments and his griefs. No one likes to enjoy an artistic pleasure alone. The artist would not be the sole person to behold the beautiful — he would make it visible to all. He creates beauty, not for self alone, but for all. Men will to enjoy in concert a fine painting, drama, or opera. The pleasure of others enters as a necessary element in one's own pleasure. A pleasurable emotion acquires all its charm only when shared with others. Man can no more be happy out of society than he can breathe out of air. Neither joy nor grief can be shut up in self. In man's emotional nature there is a force of expansion that bursts the confining envelope of self. The volitional life also is too fecund to suffice only for self. Man works and produces, and produces more than enough for self. He feels the impulsion to give of his labor and the fruits of his labor to others. He is constrained by his nature to aid others, and to give them the benefit of his strength. Man's entire nature is social. On all sides his life is open to his fellows. From all sides he invades their lives, and from all sides is invaded by them. Life is more than nutrition alone — it is also fecundity and reproduction. To live is

to give as well as to acquire. And the more man acquires, the more he must give.¹

Expenditure of life's physical, intellectual, emotional, and volitional forces is not a loss for the individual, but is an enlargement. Man wills to be social. If this will is not realized, he is tormented by the sense of the restriction upon his internal forces which press for this accomplishment. Generosity is inseparable from man's existence, it is a necessity of his life. If the internal forces of expansion do not succeed in coming to expression, but are choked or strangled, the individual dies. Life can maintain itself only on the condition that it expands, grows, gives of itself. (But even in the case where expenditure brings death, it is necessary. The plant cannot prevent itself from flowering even when to flower is to wither and die. The ephemeral insect may realize that to generate is to die, but is powerless to withstand the impulse.) It is necessary that man's life flower. The flower of human life is sociality, morality, disinterestedness. In man there is a principle of expansion which causes the individual's life to be unable to be confined within self. The richest life finds itself the most driven to share with others, to be prodigal of its resources. The most perfect human organism is also the most sociable. The mother is impelled by her own fullness to suckle her child. The charitable benefactor of humanity is impelled by his own fullness to succor the needy. By virtue of the fecundity of man's life he is led to enlarge,

¹ See Guyau, "Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction," especially pp. 104-116, 244-252.

to pour his life forces into others, to create outside of himself new centres of life and activity.

This naturalistic view regards what is natural as ethical. Each being is bent upon life, and the largest life possible. The normal individual wills to develop his life in all directions, to be an individual as rich in both intensive and extensive energy as possible. This involves necessarily the most social life. When the energy of life is at its maximum, it overflows to give of itself to others. Not all persons produce too much, a surplus, which they give away. Children, the aged, the infirm — in these people the quantity of life is diminished. There is need to save, to be parsimonious. But persons in the prime of life, in the fullness of health, produce too much. When the means of life are meagre, egoism is dominant. As the means of life become more plentiful, life becomes easier; it develops more readily; it overflows into new fields, or flowers into new forms; it enlarges; it produces more than it can consume; it lives its largest life in and through others.

Sociality must not be represented as acquired artificially, as the result of individual education or as the result of evolution. It is not adventitious in human nature. Generosity is not externally compelled; it is internally impelled. In the very bosom of life itself, in the individual seed of life, there is a force constraining it to expand. This is the cause of moral evolution, rather than its result. Disinterestedness has its basis or foundation in the obscure, even unconscious, depths of the individual's nature. Man's

moral riches are his natural and spontaneous creation.

The will to live the largest life may lead to something better than righteousness, namely the inherent and spontaneous identification of the interests of self and others. What is the difference between a "righteous" man and a "virtuous" man? A "righteous" man is he who is obedient to "law," "duty," "obligation." But obedience is not the noblest quality; and the term "righteous" is an inferior attribute, one altogether unworthy of man's possibilities. On the other hand, a "virtuous" man is he whose conduct is the expression solely of his own internal greatness of soul — the will to live the largest possible life. Great internal forces press for outlet and activity. Not all men are virtuous. Some are deformities. Some have defective wills, little or no will. But normal man is virtuous, and his moral life is the spontaneous flowering of his own vital forces. Circumstances may hinder his full development. But he wills to live, and to live as largely as possible.

The current doctrines of morality begin at the periphery. The individual finds the law imposed upon him from without. The will of his family, his community, his state, his nation, humanity, and God, is imposed upon him as an external law. This is wrong. The starting-point should lie within the individual, instead of outside him. The individual is not merely receptive, but is active; and activity is the prime and deciding thing. The kernel of the individual is an irresistible outgoing force, a well-spring of life, a will

to live the largest life. Life is active in many forms, and extends in ever-enlarging circles. Some individuals perhaps live wholly within the confines of their own bodies; but in general, life bursts this confining shell and becomes active in the family, in the community, in the state, in the nation, and even in humanity at large. The individual lives his life in these others. The welfare of his associates becomes part of his own welfare. His forces of life penetrate these others, and they become part of him.

This view lays the point of origin within the individual. True love comes from the interior of man. The force works from within outward, instead of from without inward, as in the older conception. This contrast is analogous to the change in the psychological views. Perhaps most psychologists to the present day have studied too exclusively the sensory nerves of man's nervous organism, and have made his psychical life end in receptiveness of what bears in upon him. A new movement seems starting now that studies the motor nerves, and the activity that goes out from the centre. Man's life must not be represented as a heaping up and associating together of passively received sensations, feelings, and cognitions. On the contrary, life is rather an unfolding or developing of original powers, which become active in certain directions when occasion is offered. Thus life must be represented, not as a summation of passive states, but rather as an active unfolding of original powers or energies. Life is a force, or better, a combination of many forces, pushing, pressing, unfolding, expanding. The

motive power of life, the energy, the life-force, the inner pressure towards outward development, is the will-to-live. The will-to-live realizes itself fully when life develops fully and harmoniously all its powers or energies. Human nature is endowed with what Guyau calls "moral fecundity." It is an individual necessity that one's life expand for others and in others, and on occasion give itself. This expansion is not contrary to the individual's nature, but is in accordance with it.

The older view of ethics loves to use such words as subordination, obedience, conformity, norms, laws, commandments, right, obligation. The newer conception uses such words as activity, expression, giving, unfolding, developing, pushing, expanding, loving.

The normal man is larger than his own body. He tends naturally to live in and through others. There is not often a preference of his own good to that of others; there is not ordinarily a distinction between his own good and the good of others. It is only in case of accidental conflict that the distinction is made. When it is made, perhaps most men as at present constituted prefer their own interest. But the usual way is for the individual to be at peace with others and to tend naturally to help them, to furnish them with the strength of his life. Normal man says, I will live largely. The life of others is my life. I give my life unto them that it may be increased. I live my largest life only when living with, in, and through others.

In most cases the true interests of a man's life are such that in seeking them he cannot come

into conflict with others. His true interest is to live the largest life (physically, mentally, and socially). He can do this in so far as others live their largest lives (physically, mentally, and socially). His interest is identical with theirs.

Can I "prove" that the "largest" life "ought" to include living with, in, and through other lives? I cannot. The evaluation of what constitutes the "largest" life is an individual and subjective matter, depending upon the particular will, and not a matter of intellectual demonstration and moral obligation. Declarations concerning what ought to be and what ought not to be, if understood to be in contraposition to existing facts, are idle vagaries. What is, *is*; and to say that it ought not to be, or ought to be different, is folly. The grounds of our belief in the goodness of men are matters of fact and observation, not of metaphysical speculation. The case is based on the facts of experience, not on transcendental conceptions and logical deductions. The reality of love, the naturalness of love, and the extent of love are facts of experience.

This doctrine does not deny the occurrence of real conflicts of interests, but it is better capable of explaining sacrifice than any doctrine that uses happiness or duty as its chief term. Out-giving life may bestow itself in small amounts or in one large whole. The will may prefer to concentrate the whole of life in one moment of love and sacrifice. It may prefer a few moments of sublime exaltation to many years of monotony or ennui. It does this in the case of self-sacrifice.

You may ask me, How can you demand of any

one that he sacrifice his life, when you have founded morality upon the will to maintain and develop that life? I reply, I cannot *demand* it of any one. There is no ground for a *demand* of any one that he sacrifice himself. There is no "moral law" or "obligation" *requiring* it. But there is often in the individual's nature the ability and the will to sacrifice. Sacrifice is a free gift of the good and noble nature that gives itself for others. It is not a matter of commandment, duty, obligation. For an external will to command a devotion, it would be necessary to find something objectively more precious than life. But there is no such thing. Life has no common measure with anything else. Everything else derives its value from its relation to life. The problem of the "obligation" of sacrifice has no rational and scientific solution. Any moralist is in error who pretends to have a definitive solution of this problem, enabling him to demand of the individual the sacrifice of his life as his moral obligation. Our hope rests entirely in the spontaneity, the good will, of the individual. You demand of me the sacrifice of my life in the name of humanity. I reply, Suppose there are three of us — you and I and a Hindoo. The Hindoo demands of me to throw myself under the bloody wheels of the car of Juggernaut. I reply to him, My will is not moved to that sacrifice. You would justify my refusal of his command. But you in your turn demand of me that I throw myself under the wheels of the great social machine; and if I refuse, you vilify me as a moral reprobate. Nevertheless, you cannot show me by reason that

your demand is based on a sufficient ground of obligation, any more than the Hindoo can show me a sufficient ground of obligation for his demand. Your condemnation and his condemnation are both expressions of individual will different from my own.

In the case of sacrifice, as in the case of suicide, death is consented to and willed. A man may will something with all the energy of his being, and may be ready to sacrifice for it even his life. This is not as uncommon as might at first be supposed. The lover may will death rather than banishment from his beloved. The artist may will death rather than separation from the pursuit of beauty — his beloved. The scientist may will death rather than the abandonment of the quest of truth — his beloved. If beauty, truth, and friendship may acquire as much importance as life to the artist, scientist, and lover, surely the happiness and well-being of men may acquire that much importance to the altruist. The moral person, the lover of men, may will death rather than permit harm to his loved ones — family, nation, or race.

Thanks to the essential principle of moral fecundity, the human being is led to expand towards others by the very nature of his will. His will is moved without an appeal to a mysterious sense of obligation. The "call of duty" is a call, not from something external, but from an internal superabundance of life demanding outlet, activity, a giving away. Duty has usually been interpreted as a sentiment of constraint, compulsion, external necessity. It is rather a

power. Man's life is an excess, a surplus, a too-much. It therefore repeats itself; it gives of itself; it nourishes not only itself, but others.

Morality is the result of superabundance of life, interior expansion; immorality, of restriction of life, internal deficiency or mutilation. The older views of ethics sought an external motive force for the will, and tried to locate it in fear before an all-powerful God or in obeisance before the superior power of society and humanity. Why do our friends search for religious, metaphysical, and social sanctions? Because they think of man as naturally asking: "Who will enforce the moral laws if I can manage to disobey them? Who will punish me if I do not do what I do not want to do?" But this is a wrong conception of human nature. Normal man does not regard it as an unpleasant compulsion to do good to his fellows. He does not think, when serving his fellows, "I hate to do this, but I am afraid not to do it." On the contrary, he loves his fellows and rejoices in their good, and gives of his life to them.

To explain morality, then, external motives need not be brought in. The internal action of human life itself suffices. In all stages of the will's development — blind impulse, sensual desire, and rational will — its aim is always fullness of life and activity. The good and the right is that which satisfies the will. Every willing being names that his highest good towards which his deepest nature is directed. Man's will is directed towards the largest life — physical, mental, social. This is his greatest good. His will declares this

his greatest good; his intellect receives this standard from his will, and judges everything by it.

According as good will grows stronger with all, the actions that express it and the ideas that correspond to it become more perfect, and this growing perfection approaches without ceasing the end of its evolution, entire unity. The ideal will be reached when all acts, however diverse, will nevertheless be harmonious and will manifest in the world the same good will. The successful society will be that which is a society of persons, each one of whom is completely fulfilling his own nature and at the same time contributing towards the realization of perfection on the part of all the other persons.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

FROM the outset of this investigation, emphasis has been laid upon the difference between finding a rational ground of the obligation to be altruistic and finding an explanation of how some people have come to be altruistic. This investigation has been concerned essentially with trying to ascertain whether there has been discovered a satisfactory rational ground of obligation, a convincing reason which can be given a man who demands: "Why should I prefer the interests of another in any particular, no matter how large or small? Why should I sacrifice any good of mine for any good of another?" Sacrifice is understood to mean a genuine loss to self — there is to be no hope of some other enlargement to self as the result of the sacrifice, or any expectation of reactionary benefit. The religious and metaphysical solutions were rejected because they were transcendental, instead of empirical and scientific. The legal solutions were rejected because they were based on external constraint. The logical solutions were rejected because in all their forms they started with major premises which were gratuitous and which had to be furnished by the will. The various scientific solutions were rejected because they really turned out to be only explanations of morality, instead of justifica-

tions. They explained how some men have come to act altruistically as the result of psychological association, physiological inheritance, natural selection and evolution; but they did not show why altruism *ought* to be preferred. The final result of all the separate investigations is that egoism and altruism do not rest on rational grounds. If a man makes a distinction between the interests of self and of others, and prefers his own, he cannot be convinced that he ought to prefer the interests of others. If an individual does not will to be disinterested, it is impossible to prove to him the obligation to be disinterested. To one who is not by nature self-sacrificing it can never be demonstrated by any process of logical reasoning that self-sacrifice is obligatory. And it is not a case of "convinced intellect but selfish will." The person with whom you are arguing cannot be regarded as seeing the rightness of self-sacrifice though refusing to act accordingly. It is simply impossible for you to show him a sufficient rational ground of obligation. Morality is not the result of logical proof, but of natural will. It is justified only because the individual wills it. The conclusion is that we must accept human nature as we find it. Egoism and altruism are natural qualities or characters. The will is fundamental; and egoism, altruism, goodness, badness, and the other moral phenomena must be accepted as they are given in the essential nature of a man, and as not subject to change under the influence of reason. It is impossible to change egoism into altruism; and it is impossible to change altruism into egoism. Society may attempt to fetter

natural egoism and natural altruism with the chains of abstract reasoning, but there is little ground for hope that the natural disposition will not break these chains and resume its place of supremacy. The direction of the will is the primary fact; the intelligence is secondary and subservient to the will. There is no way of making a man good by command or argument. If he does not naturally love others, it is useless and hopeless for you to command him to love them or to try to reason him into loving them.

All the schools of moral philosophy are forced to a halt before the chasm that separates "Me" and "You," "Mine" and "Thine," "individual personal interest" and "general social interest." They are all unable to fill or to bridge the chasm. But nature saves. There are few such chasms in existence.

Ordinarily the individual life is interwoven with the general life. The individual life expends itself for others and in others. It is "morally fecund." Instead of attributing to natural man a bad will, a vicious character, we attribute to him an essentially good will, and say that vice and wrong-doing are most often necessities submitted to from without, not from within, or if submitted to from within, are the result of unfinished evolution, namely, animal impulses not yet eliminated, and permit us to hope for amelioration. Of course much of the evil of the world is due to "bad wills," but these cannot be converted into good wills. A great deal of the evil in the world, however, is due to ignorance. The wills are good, but mistakes are made in carrying

them out. There is not knowledge enough to accomplish the wills.

I do not acknowledge a "duty" to serve others on the part of any man. I recognize, however, that men love one another, and will serve one another. But I cannot prove that this service is due, or is owed, to the others. It is the free offering of a good will. I recognize no duty, no imperative law, obligating me to serve my fellows. But in my nature I experience a will to serve them. I love my fellow-men, and I will do them good so far as I can. You may think to give me pause when you say: "But this will is not free; it is necessitated. You love others because you must love them. It is not a free love. You cannot help loving them." I reply: "No; truly, I cannot help loving others. My nature is to love them. I cannot be other than my nature. Loving others is my life. I rejoice in living my life."

The words "duty" and "obligation" could be given up without harm. The pulpit, the lecture platform, and the press could abandon the preaching of duty, DUTY, DUTY. They should show us how to accomplish the good which we will. What we want is not exhortations to "obey duty"; we wish to know *how* we can accomplish the good which we will. We will serve ourselves and the world. We ask of you, Show us how to do it best. In other words, we come to you for knowledge, not to be told to be good. We are good now, but do not know how to carry out our good will. We come to you to be instructed, not to be converted.

The suppression of the "categorical impera-

tive," the "absolute ground of obligation," and even of every ground of obligation, does not suppress also morality. To destroy "duty" is not to destroy the innumerable expressions of the presence of good will in the world. Disinterestedness, devotion, and sacrifice are rooted in the will of man, and have always taken place, and will always take place.

We are reduced to searching in the actual facts of experience for the foundation of our hopes. We find a few men in whom there is a total failure of any consideration for others' interests — persons whom students of psychiatry have agreed to call "morally insane." These persons are wholly insensible concerning the good and evil of others. They experience no feeling of sympathy with others; they take no interest in promoting others' welfare. We find a good many men who are egoistic and prefer their own interests to those of others. We find a great many men who make the distinction between their own good and others' good, and maintain a fair equilibrium between the two. We find a few men who make the distinction between self-interest and others' interest and then prefer others' interest. But we find the majority of men making no distinction between the good of self and the good of others, but identifying themselves with others in all their thoughts and actions. It is these last whom we must regard as "normal." All must be accepted as products of natural processes as "necessary" and unalterable as any other. A man's "moral nature" is not the result of his "free choice" any more than is the original size of his liver.

In those persons who have it, a "good" will, and the consequent development of the instinct, sentiment, and judgment that the well-being of others is indissolubly bound up with the well-being of self and that both must be sought together, is as wholly a *natural* and *necessary* phenomenon as the nature and development of an animal or plant. And in those persons who have not a "good" will no amount of preaching can call it into existence. Mere fear of society's force, dread before the possible punishments of a deity, reverence before the lofty considerations and speculations of metaphysics, and the intellectual satisfaction of correct logical judgments cannot be called upon to unite men whom nature has separated, nor to account for the strength of the tie which binds men together. The strength of the tie rests in the fundamental and essential nature of men, in the natural good will. But what about *justifying* such a will? To *justify* the will! Absurd! The will does not wait for reason to justify it. It needs no justification. The direction of the will is a fundamental and unalterable *fact*. It is here, a fact of experience, and must be accepted as ultimate.

If a man accepts this view, will he not be led to say: "I have been exerting myself a great deal to make men good. I now see that such endeavors are useless. I am glad to know the real case. Henceforth I shall not make any efforts in that direction." I reply: Quite right. It is useless to try to make men good. The true aim of social endeavor is to give good will a chance to grow and develop. The true aim of education is to

show the intellect how the purposes of the good will may be accomplished. Those who do not will "right" should be left to die out. Of course there are egoists in the world. I have tried to show that for such people there is no hope of persuasion by appeals to reason. No rational ground of obligation can be found, to convince them and cause them to prefer others' interests to their own or to identify others' interests with their own; for egoism and altruism are not matters of intellect, but of will, the fundamental nature of a being. A bad man cannot be reached and converted through the intellect. As Spencer says, "Creeds pasted upon the mind, good principles learned by rote, lessons in right and wrong, will not eradicate vicious propensities; though people, in spite of their experience as parents and citizens, persist in hoping they will." Through education a bad man may be restrained for a time in the ways of a good life, but there is always great danger that the fundamental nature will break through the restraint of the superficial, and the judgment be, "The sow that was washed has returned to her wallowing in the mire."

All that social effort and education can do is to work upon the environment so that the naturally good will can develop, and to show to the intellect how the good will can accomplish itself. Education is the result of a recognition of the necessity of knowledge for the accomplishment of what is willed, the attainment of what is trying to be done. It is the result of a perception of the dependence of the will upon means, instruments, methods. That social effort and education should

implant a good will where it is not is impossible. The horticulturist does not try to change a thistle seed into the nature of a rose; but being given the seed of a rose, he endeavors to provide the best opportunities for its perfect development. Similarly, the social worker, being given a good will, can provide the best opportunities for its perfect development. He can exert himself to the utmost in cleaning the slums, abolishing the use of alcohol, furnishing schools, and the thousand other means now begun and carried on. The true aim of moral education is not to endeavor to implant a good will where it is not, but to show how the purposes of the good will may be accomplished. The race has nothing to hope from those whose wills are bad, except that in the process of nature they will give place to better products.

The phenomena of will in the world lead me to think that the wills of normal men are good — that is to say, they identify the interests of others with the interests of self. There is often a great reservoir of power and capacity in apparently the most hopeless individual. What is lacking in the multitudes is not so much “good will” as opportunity. “The will to live the largest life” is a better description of the will than the expression “the will to live.” The will to live the largest life achieves itself not merely by living physically and within the confines of its own body; it achieves itself also within the offspring of its body and mind, and within the other bodies and minds which it can join to itself as part of its own life.

This doctrine does not lead to pessimism. It teaches that most men identify the good of self with the good of others, and seek the largest life for both themselves and others. A fair analogy to this, although it must not be pressed too far, is the relation of a tree to its branches, leaves, and fruit. We cannot say that it is possible for the tree to sacrifice its own good for the good of its branches, its leaves, or its fruit. The life of the tree is not separate from their life. It lives its life in and through them. It does not regard it as sacrifice on its part to nourish them. Nourishing them is a form of its life. They are outlets through which it gives out its energy; they are the forms in which its life comes to expression. Its will to live is realized in and through them. It lives most largely when it supports and nourishes most; and it is stunted and dwarfed when it nourishes but few. Now, somewhat similarly, though of course not entirely so, a man lives in and through his wife, children, relatives, friends, business connections, fellow-citizens, etc. In promoting their life he is not sacrificing his own, but is living his largest life. Stripped of these, he is stripped of part of his life. His life is stunted and dwarfed if it does not reach out to them. Nourishing them is a form of his life. They are outlets through which he gives out his energy; they are the forms in which his life comes to expression. His will to live is realized in and through them. He lives most largely when he supports and nourishes most, and when these fruits of his life attain their greatest perfection.

This is to illustrate the extent in which human

life can come to expression. As to the content of human life, it must be thought of not in a vegetative way, but as comprehending all the various forms in which human life is active — most certainly as including the pleasures of the sensibility, the delights of the æsthetical nature, the pursuit and attainment of truth, and the realization of sociability and affection.

The more we can produce of life in all these forms, and the more we can overflow and give of this surplus to others, so that this extra life becomes life to them, just so much more largely are we living. The world's great men are immortal because they live still in us. This is a truth in the scriptural teaching concerning Jesus, that he lives again in his disciples, in those who act as if he acted in and through them. The world's great men nourish many others with the surplus of their life. The large and full life constantly extends itself in all directions; and when this richly expanding life has grown as much in one direction as the natural limitations will allow, it at once seeks another direction in which it can develop. Here and there we see a man whose life is so extensive that it seems to sustain a vast portion of the earth. We may touch this and that, and say it is part of his life, it is vitally connected with him, it derives its sustenance from him.

This relation between the individual and others is of course reciprocal. The individual lives in his family, in his community, in his nation, and in the race. He lives his largest life when they live their largest lives. But also, reciprocally, the

race lives in his nation, the nation lives in his community, the community lives in his family, and his family lives in him. These others live in and through him, and live their largest lives when he lives his largest life.

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